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## **ABSTRACT**

**T**his year, the European Union Ecolabel (EUE) celebrates its twenty third birthday.

When analysing the results of the past two decades, most research on the subject tends to say that the effective results of the EUE are weak.

In fact, if we compare the quantity of products available in the EU with that of EU ecolabeled ones, it is true that the impact of EUE can be questioned. 43000 products across Europe bearing the flower logo (or the EUE) does not seem that high when we think of the size of the European market.

**I**n the course of this Dissertation an inductive qualitative approach was employed to collect and analyze stakeholder's perspectives regarding their feelings about the European environmental labels results.

In total, twelve actors were interviewed. They were chosen amongst national authorities in charge of the EU ecolabel certification, consumer's associations, European federations which sectors are impacted by the EUE, companies of different sizes, some certified and others not, and policy officers from the EU Commission.

**T**he findings presented in the following chapters suggest that:

- All interviewees considered that the results of the EUE could be enhanced and brought forth suggestions based on their own experience. These suggestions relate to pan-European marketing actions, less time demanding procedures, more communication with businesses and developments of KPI for the sake of transparency.
- Several said that the EUE is a label of excellence and its goal should be to lead the way in environmental certification and, in this regard, the results of the EUE have been highly achieved.
- Most interviewees held the view that the work undertaken by DG environment and the Joint Research Center (JRC) has to be recognized because they have been able to support and develop the EU Ecolabel whilst facing budget cuts. Nonetheless, they also spoke about the need to reference EUE green policies. The European label is only referenced in the Sustainable Consumption Action Plan and most interviewees didn't understand why the label was not better supported by the EC.

**F**inally, because price has a major influence on consumption, a supermarket study was carried out to compare the prices of the labelled and non-labelled products in the different product groups available. The conclusion of this study is that in most categories, the price of a labelled product is not higher than the one of an unlabelled one. Moreover, this supermarket study also intended to test the visibility of green products in retailers. In that regard it showed that the location of EUE certified product tended to be best when the retailer acted as producer of an EUE labelled product.

The dissertation concludes with more general observations on the impact of the EUE on companies and the consumer.

## **DEDICATION**

This Dissertation is dedicated to my son. May he find in his studies as much pleasure as I did whilst working on this dissertation. I really can't wait to have your lovely face in my graduation picture. I love you.

A special thank you to my family: ex-husband (You rock), mother (The best), uncles (Paulo és o mais lindo), aunts and cousins who always supported me and believed I would be able to do this.

I thank you for your love and dedication. I thank you for teaching me that giving up is not an option and I thank you for being "pains in the bottom" when I need you to.

Finally, this dissertation is also dedicated to my friends who were always available to read this research and bring their insights to my work. Rui, Claudia, Paz, Antonio, Duda, Joana, Miguel; life would be so boring without you guys!

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### **DECLARATION OF AUTHENTICITY**

I declare that the material contained in this project is the end result of my own work and that due acknowledgement has been given in the bibliography and references to **ALL** sources, be they printed, electronic or personal.

The word count of this project is **15682**- Without: Cover page/ Table of Contents / List of Images / Abbreviations/ Bibliography and Annexes.

SIGNED- Claudia Martins

DATE: 15 March 2015

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## ABBREVIATIONS

- EUE- EU Ecolabel
- SCP- Sustainable Consumption and Production
- KPI- Key Performance Indicators
- EUEB- EU Ecolabeling Board
- EMS- Environment Management System
- LCA- Life cycle analysis
- ISO- International Organization for Standardization
- A.I.S.E- International Association for Soaps, Detergents and Maintenance Products
- EFCI- European Federation of Cleaning Industries
- EC- European Commission
- JRC- Joint Research Center
- IPTS- Institute for Prospective Technological Studies
- UN- United Nations
- SD- Sustainable Development
- EPIS- Environmental product information schemes
- ESEC- European Social and Economic Committee
- CEFIC- The European Chemical Industry Council
- EUAPME-European Association of Craft, small and medium sized enterprises




## CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

### AIM AND OBJECTIVES

The aim of this dissertation is to:

***Gather the views of stakeholders on the EUE in order to measure the greening chain reactions of the environmental label in companies and in reaching the consumer.***

To fulfil this aim, a set of objectives were defined:

- ✓ Investigate concepts and theories on ecolabeling to analyse the relation between ecolabeling, sustainable management and green consumption.  

- ✓ Gather and analyse primary data from the EUE stakeholders and crosscheck the data with the literature.  

- ✓ Identify the positive and negative aspects of the EUE in terms of possible chain reactions on companies and the consumer.  

- ✓ Derive conclusions on current practices and offer recommendations for future policy.



## A BRIEF HISTORY OF ECOLABELLING

The Global Ecolabelling Network definition of Ecolabelling is: "Ecolabelling" is a voluntary method of environmental performance (...). An "ecolabel" is a label which identifies overall, proven environmental preference of a product or service within a specific product/service category" (GEN:2015).

The first "green stickers" appeared in the seventies in the USA and Canada, as response to the growing public awareness and questioning on pollution, resources scarcity and environmental sociology (Redclift, M. & Woodgate, G., 1997)

The first country that developed an ecolabel was Germany, with the Blue Angel, in 1978, as a governmental initiative. The Blue Angel was later as an example for the ISO 14024 standards for the type I environmental labelling. (The Blue Angel: 2015).

Nowadays, the Ecolabel index reports that they are following "458 ecolabels in 197 countries and in 25 industry sectors" (Ecolabel Index: 2015).

Since the beginning, ecolabels seek the conservation and protection of the environment (GEN: 2004). In order to reach this goal, **environmental labelling impacts on two sides of consumption.**

- First, it focusses on informing the consumer on environmental costs of consumption by using a trusted recognized label.
- Second, it aims to encourage the other stakeholders of the process to increase environmental standards (Galarraga Gallastegui, I., 2002).

Although there are several types of environmental labels, ISO defined three specific types of ecolabels:

Type I <sup>#</sup>	--	a voluntary, multiple-criteria based, third party program that awards a license which authorises the use of environmental labels on products indicating overall environmental preferability of a product within a product category based on life cycle considerations
Type II <sup>#</sup>	--	informative environmental self-declaration claims
Type III <sup>#</sup>	--	voluntary programs that provide quantified environmental data of a product, under pre-set categories of parameters set by a qualified third party and based on life cycle assessment, and verified by that or another qualified third party

# As of July 2004, international ISO standards have been developed and implemented for Type I and Type II labelling, while work continues on development of a standard relating to Type III. Consequently, the ISO definition for Type III should be considered a "draft working definition" that could be revised.

Image-1 source: GEN information paper. 2004.

Examples of the above labels would be:

Type I- The EU ecolabel or the Blue Angel. Pass or fail criteria

Type II- The Energy Star. No pass or fail criteria

Type III- The A.I.S.E charter. LCA based. (Dantes: 2015).

Comparisons between the three types of labels are as follows:

Criteria Areas / Metrics:		Life Cycle Consideration:	
Type I	multiple	Type I	yes
Type II	single	Type II	no
Type III	multiple	Type III	yes
Selectivity:		Third Party Verification/Certification:	
Type I	yes	Type I	yes
Type II	no	Type II	preferred
Type III	no	Type III	yes

Image-2 source: GEN information paper. 2004.

The EUE (or EU flower) was first established in 1992. It is nowadays part of the SCP policy which “aims at reducing the negative impact of consumption and production on the environment, health, climate and natural resources.” (EC No 66/2010: 2015).



Image 3- Source EU ecolabel website

To achieve the above goal, the EUE is expected to set **simple to understand and to use criteria's** to achieve environmental performance of products and services. Moreover, the criteria should be based on scientific evidence, **market oriented and based on whole life cycle of the product** (EC No 66/2010: 2015).

Commission Decision 2010/709/EU established the ecolabeling board. The membership of the EUEB is divided between: - 1 Representative for each Member State (plus Iceland, Lichtenstein and Norway); - 4 industry and business representatives; - 1 consumer's representative and - 1 environmental NGO.

The goals of the EC and the EUEB are to **contribute on criteria development**, to agree on the working plan, to provide opinion on product groups, and to contribute to the review of the EUE scheme (EUEB: 2011)



Timeline of major events in EU Ecolabel history.

Image-4 source: News alert 71: 2011

The scientific assessment of the environmental performance of products and services is done by the JRC through the European Product Bureau and the IPTS institute (JRC: 2015).

In terms of results, the latest EUE news alert available at the time of writing (Issue 95 third quarter of 2014), shows that there are across the EU 1910 flower licenses which results in **43160 products available**.

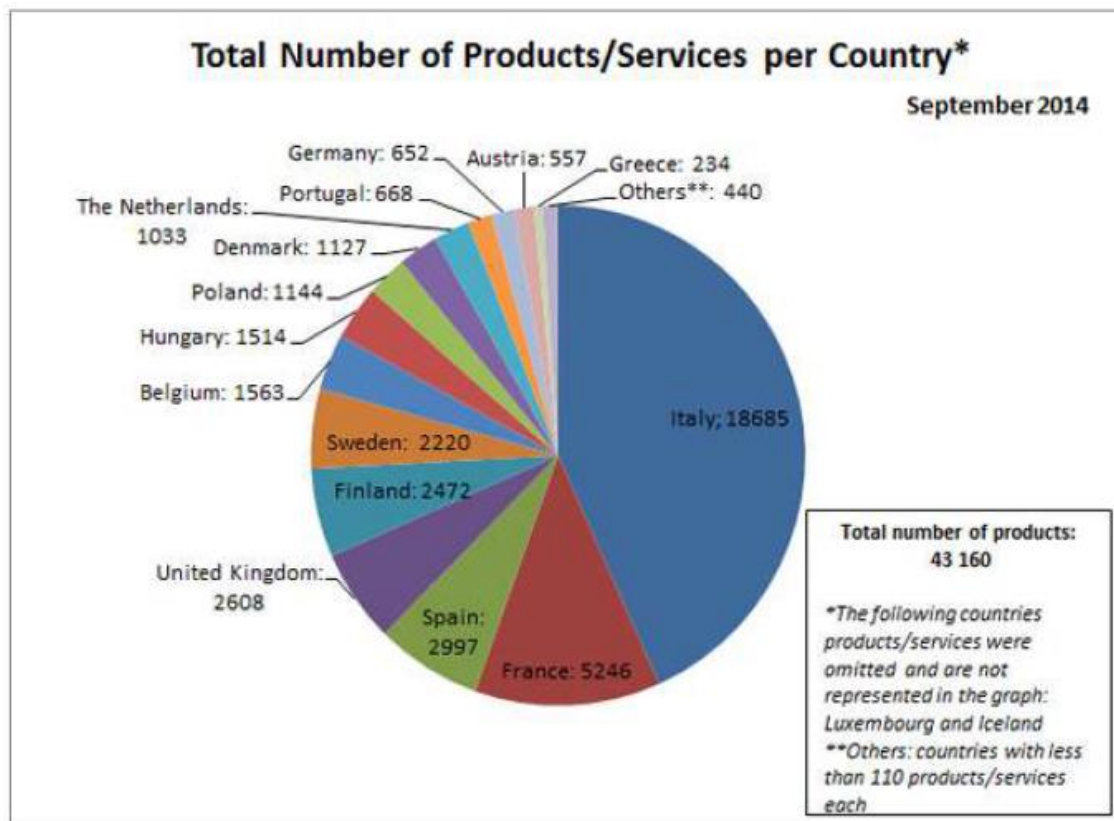


Image-5 source: News alert 95: 2014

The graphic above shows the disparity of licences amongst Member States which in terms is a tool to understand the impact of the flower in the EU.

The reason for this imbalance might be found several root causes that will furthermore discussed in Chapter 4 and 5 of the dissertation:

- The different support of Member states to the EUE;
- The existence of a strong national label;
- The information given to national industries about the EUE;
- The support given to companies;
- The type of industry in the country;
- The consumer demand;
- The economic state of the industry in the different Member States.

The breakdown of licenses per product categories ranges in number. Some sectors seem to be keener to apply to the EUE.

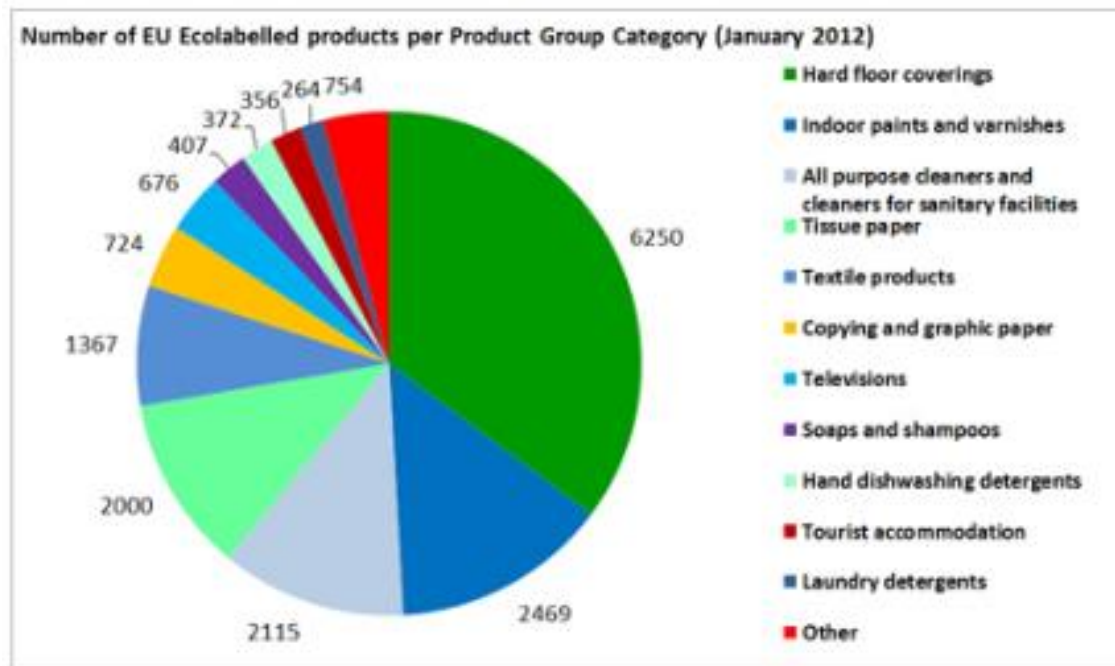


Image-6 source: EUE, Fact and figures.

In the cases where the results are less impressive, such as “copying and graphic paper” or in the case of “tourist accommodations” and “laundry detergents”, the explanation could be the existence of other labels that are more recognized by the market (such as FSC, regional labels for tourism or the A.I.S.E Charter for Sustainable Cleaning).

Although the labels might follow different parameters and criteria for certification their impact on the end-consumer doesn't seem to be related with the later but, instead, with the marketing campaigns which better translate the image that the consumer has about his green life and impact. These findings are further discussed in chapter 5.

Despite the claims that the results of the EUE are weak, the truth is that the number of licenses has been growing each year. One of the reasons for this is the development of new product and service categories developed.

## DISSERTATION STRUCTURE

This Dissertation will contain six chapters, including this introductory chapter. The second chapter sets out the literature review. The third chapter contains the methodology used for this study. The fourth chapter presents the findings. The fifth chapter presents the conclusions and recommendations for future research on the specific case of the EUE and the sixth chapter attempts to understand if the EUE is a success or a failure in greening chains reactions on both sides of consumption.

## CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

### INTRODUCTION

One of the major challenges in this dissertation was finding literature that would assess the impact of Ecolabeling in both the company and the consumer. Moreover, the studies based solely on the first or the second variable tended to highlight the obstacles encountered in evaluating the quantitative impact of an environmental label.

Galarraga Gallastegui sets the tone by saying, while introducing the market impact, that not only this information is usually confidential but, when available, 'it is difficult to separate the effect of other factors from the effect of the label' (2002:324) in corporate areas such as sales.

- On the side of the companies, OECD says: "Some **scattered anecdotal evidence shows that sales(...) increased when an eco-label has been obtained**, but there is no statistical data in general to show the market power an eco-label may confer on a product" (1997:5).
- On the side of the consumer, all studies start from the common ground of the importance of consumption and its impact on the environment (Galarraga Gallastegui, I., 2002, OECD 1997, EC No 66/2010, Anderson, 1990, to cite a few) yet none brought to bear strong scientific evidence of the influence of ecolabels on consumers.

All EU barometers concord on the growing apprehensions of EU citizens regarding environmental damages. Moreover, a vast majority of citizens think that they can personally contribute to protecting the environment (Special Barometer 416, 2014). Yet, most studies show that environmental consciousness does not translate directly into conscious or green consumption. Authors such as Peattie question the relevance of the term Green consumption exposing it as an "oxymoron". Green implies the conservation of environmental resources, while consumption generally involves their destruction" (Peattie, K., 2010:197). Because the term "green" can mean several things (from buying locally to not buying at all), green consumption will be defined depending on the "green" agenda or, in other words, depending on the views (and areas of interest) of the person defining it. For example, in the case of a study about green marketing (such as in the case of Peattie referenced by Galarraga Gallastegui, I) green consumption will be the purchasing or non-purchasing decision based at least partly on environmental or social criteria (2002:319). For the UN, at the Oslo Roundtable on Sustainable Production and Consumption, green consumption is "the use of goods and services that respond to basic needs and bring a better quality of life, while minimising the use of natural resources, toxic materials and emissions of waste and pollutants over the life cycle, so as not to jeopardise the needs of future generations" (Oslo: 1994). This last definition leaves the "non-purchasing" criteria apart, maybe because the definition is established from a "consumption and production" point of view.

Despite the definition dilemma, most studies dedicated to the role of ecolabels in consumption (which will, hopefully, be green) tend to agree on the fact that **an ecolabel is an easy way for the conscious consumer to spot a product or a service** that will probably be in line with his/her environmental beliefs.

## REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

### Companies and environmental labels, what do we know?

**T**here are two opposite points of view on the impact of environmental policies in companies.

**O**n the one hand, there is the research made by Gottberg et al., 2006 or Miemczyk, 2008 for whom environmental policies represent constraints that impact businesses negatively. For Miemczyk, the pressure from mandatory and voluntary schemes enables a “harmonized response” of companies in environmental subjects but, tends to disable the win-win environmental solutions given by individualistic competitive advantage (2008:281). In other words, in the specific case of the EUE, the criteria’s used for certification of products might cut off industry RD for environmental improvement bringing companies to a common ground of response.

**O**n the other hand, Seidel et al., 2006, based on the growing customer demand and on the increasing environmental legislation (references to which can be found in other studies such as Argument et al., 1998; McAloone, 1998; van Hemel, 1998) states that compliance with environmental standards will become more and more of a competitive advantage for business.

For Houe and Grabot, “The new awareness of the consumers regarding environmental issues should allow companies to gain a competitive advantage by obtaining eco-labels which certify the low impact of a product on the environment” (2008:1).

This duality between policies, companies and the prospect for enhanced consumer preference is not new and already happened at the beginning of CSR policies. For Kinderman (2011), companies need to be free in order to be responsible “As a *quid pro quo* for a lighter regulatory touch, CSR provides compensation for some of the social dislocations that result from neo-liberalism” (Kinderman, D., 2011:30). Yet, whilst CSR was about managerial ethics, environmental policies require the development of managerial science to more pragmatic and rateable disciplines such as natural sciences (Pogutz, S., 2007).

**F**or many businesses, being sustainable outweighs immediate benefits (Bansal, P., 2008). Pogutz goes further and says that a sustainable business in terms of the management view might not translate into a sustainable business at societal and ecological level (Pogutz, S., 2007: 30). Furthermore, the author thinks that business is missing (or not using) the tools needed to evaluate (or re-evaluate) the corporate centred view based on exclusively on profit. Even though profit is the base for a stable economy (and impacts on employment, which impacts on sales, which impacts on profit), Pogutz says companies need to develop a “new paradigm for accounting”, breaking down the boundaries that separate management disciplines, natural sciences and social sciences.

**B**ansal goes further and shows the vicious cycle of corporate sustainable development (SD). She says that organizations will only fully subscribe to sustainable development when it becomes the norm. Most companies say that SD is not profitable, yet the benefits of SD can only be achieved if a majority companies adopt SD standards (Bansal, P., 2002: 131).



In line with Bansal, the EU institutions have been putting a lot of energy and financial resources in the development of the green economy, the creation of green jobs creation and the development of sustainable consumption and production.

Using Polonsky et al, vocabulary, “enviropreneurialship” (2001:21) development is directly linked with policies and motivations and, we might say it is enhanced by green policies.

In terms of green business motivations, Bansall, P. and Roth, K., developed a model based on the reasons for the firm’s ecological responsiveness (2000: 729).

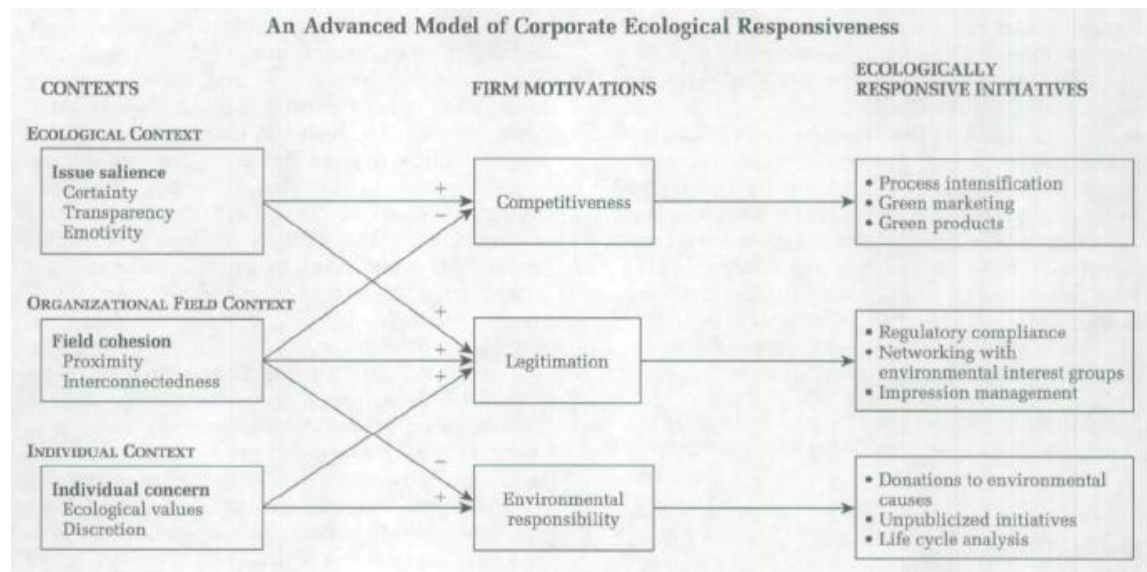


image 7- Bansall, P. and Roth, K., model for the firm’s ecological responsiveness (2000: 729).

Process intensification as green responsive initiative has been analyzed by Hillary, when researching on the positive effect of the Environmental Management System (EMS) in enterprises. For her, the positive effects of the EMS in the companies are noticeable both internally - Organisational benefits, financial benefits, employees benefits - and externally - Commercial benefits, environmental benefits, communication benefits (2004). Yet, depending of the kind of companies (international, big, medium and small) the barriers to the EMS are the counterpart to the benefits.

For example, for a big company that has a quality department fully dedicated to other certifications, applying to the EUE will not be a problem, as procedures are already in place in order to ensure other environmental certifications. Yet, for SME’s (which account 99% of all business in Europe as per DG Enterprise and Industry webpage, 2015), developing EMS can be a burden in terms of costs, human resources and time with which they cannot cope unless further encouragement is given.

In terms of the motivation of competitiveness (as in increase in sales), Morris (1997) referenced by Galarraga Gallastegui states that labels can impact on sales and image and inspire companies to account for their environmental impact (2002:318). In terms of Bansall’s model above, sales could be added to the competitiveness response whist the accountancy of the environmental impact can be linked to legitimation and environmental responsibility.

So, one of the positive aspects of an environmental label is that **it can be the first step a company takes in greening** at least one of its products (which can, therefore, bring the company to rethink its entire production).

Moreover, this green “first step” can easily reach (or can easily be communicated to) the customer because the label logo is on the packaging.



## The consumer and environmental labels, what do we know?

EU barometers show evidence that the EU citizens are growing more and more concerned with environmental protection with 77% of them saying that environmental problems have a direct impact in their daily lives and 85% thinking that they can play a role in protecting the environment (Special Barometer 416, 2014).

Communicating green products can be a way to reach these worried consumers and increase companies' sales hence increasing their competitiveness.

Picturing "the Consumer" as a whole is impossible. The complexity of the term requires several variables to be analysed in order to reach any meaningful conclusion on consumer's prediction.

- **First, in the specific case of environmental labels, studies by Davis, 1994; Polonsky et al., 1998; Portthero et al, 1997 cited by Chamorro and Beñagil show that, from the consumer perspective, there is high scepticism towards ecological messages. The fact that one product is ecolabeled doesn't mean that the entire production process of all the products made by the firm is as environmentally friendly as the green claims of one specific product. This might be perceived as entailing deception and lead the consumer even further away from green purchasing habits. As said by the above referred authors, "the ecolabel guarantees nothing about the general behaviour of the firm" (2006:21).**

A parallel can be established here with Pogutz: a sustainable image doesn't mean a sustainable company.

For Loyola, "a consumer must know and trust before they can use [ecolabels] (...) in purchasing decisions" (2005: 23). Szarka cited by Galarraga Gallastegui says that effort has to be put in consumer's education. The education of the consumer is part of the SCP action plan. It states "The Commission will therefore also support actions to increase consumers' awareness and help them to make more informed choices. This will be done, for example, by developing tools to inform young people and increase their awareness and on-line education modules for adults on sustainable consumption" (EU COM: 2008).

Despite of this awareness, little or nothing has been done in relation to consumer education either by the EC or by labelled companies. For Collins, "people cannot take responsibility for harm without knowledge [and] Consumers cannot make autonomous decisions without being informed" (2001:334). She points out that one of the main problems of environmental labels is that they only visually inform the consumer that the product they are buying is in conformity with standards without explaining which the standards are. The consumer who buys an ecolabeled product knows that he is buying an environmentally friendly product but he doesn't know why this product is friendlier than the other next to it.

Collins goes further and says that labels should not only show the positive impacts but should also develop "visual cues and reminders of the [environmental) cost of the product" (2011:344). This could be a reminder of the dual aspect of consumption already referenced with Peattie.

Finally, mention must be made to Reiser and Simons who tested the Ecolabel promotion in the case of tourist services in New Zealand. They concluded that,

because the New Zealand tourist did not “perceive any environmental threat related to their tourist activities” (2005:612) they were not influenced by the promotion of the label and didn’t take it into account while choosing between ecolabeled and not ecolabeled tourist accommodation options. Again, information on choice impacts appears to be one of the main pillars of environmental labelling success.

In conclusion, and in line with Bansal’s firm motivation model, Prakash says “if managers believe consumers (...) greenness as a motivating variable, they should invest in conveying [green] information” (2002:295).

Green communication goes through green marketing. For Chamorro and Beñagil, ecological messages translated in superficial claims are viewed by the consumers as a commercial tool developed for deception (2006:12). For these authors, ecolabels are not simply used by firms as marketing tool but as mirror of a green marketing philosophy (2006: 21).

Polonsky and Rosenberg are in line with Chamorro and Beñagil. For them, green marketing has to be the reflection of a strategic approach of the entire firm that will, in the end, develop into external communication with consumers (2001:21).

- **Second, authors like Tim Jackson highlight that living sustainably is conflicting (2009:152). He says that there are limits to [sustainable] voluntarism”(2009:152) because there are huge incentives for unsustainable consumption such as lower prices, more aggressive marketing, easier to find products and brand preferences.**

Moreover, for Biel and Dahlstrand (2005), Sener and Hazer (2008) and Wheale and Hinton (2007), referenced by Young et al (2010), it appears that believing in environmental claims is directly linked to brand strength and trust or, in other words, with the marketing communication of the brand and its environmental claims.

One of the implications of these considerations could be that, in doubt about a label or claim; the consumer might choose the product from the company he/she trusts (Loyola, B., 2005:24).

In that sense, the “green alliances” between firms, public authorities and Environmental NGO’s referred by Loyola while referencing Polonsky and Rosenberg (2001) might be one of the solutions to recover from consumer scepticism and allow companies to embrace their greening competitive advantage.

Going further and in the case of the EUE, the EVER study (Lange et al) highlighted the fact that European environmental labels should establish synergies in terms of the certification to reduce the quantity of environmental labels. For example, products bearing the Blue Angel label could, if certification requirements were the same, bear the EUE. In terms of the consumer, it would ease the understanding and enforce the confidence in the label and in terms of the company it would lower the certification cost. This issue is further developed in the conclusions of this dissertation.

These green alliances can be placed in the legitimation part of Bandal’s and Roth model. The problem with field cohesion, as represented in the model, is that it seems to impact negatively on competitiveness and environmental responsibility mainly because of the loss of the individualistic competitive advantage referred before in Miemczyk.

In the particular case of the environmental labels, the competitive advantage gained through label certification in terms of consumer communication (if done) could be lost if a direct competitor also uses the label - unless the greening product is accompanied by a greening firm (Prakash, A., 2002). It is in the latter that the company will show its individualistic input for SD. Green alliances are also one of the recommendations of Rubik and Frankl when they talk about a multi-stakeholder approach where “change agents [must be identified amongst stakeholders] in order to push the process [of EPIS]” (2005:294).

Finally, if the recognized environmental labels need to be helped in order to conquer consumers trust, Rubik and Frankl also conclude that there is a need to establish a strong, coherent, and coercive policy to prevent and punish green washing (2005: 304). Moreover, the authors also recommend that ISO Type III schemes should be further standardized in order to ensure their environmental compliance.

- **Third, Young et al (2010) report a gap between the “attitude behaviour” and the “values actions” that, despite the concerns about environmental questions, seems to entail a conflict which hinders the process leading from concern into purchase. For the author, when a consumer decides to change its buying patterns for more sustainable ones, a more “complex decision making process” (Young et al, 2010:20), needs to be engaged. Moreover he says that the lack of motivation for buying labelled products is related to the lack of “time and space in people’s life (...) in an increasingly busy lifestyle” (2009:30). As referred in the EVER study related to the Evaluation of EMAS and Eco-label for their Revision, “this is not just a problem of being aware of EU Eco-label (...) but also choosing it on the market” (2005:7).**

Loyola (2005) estimates that the variables that drive consumption are:

- Values,
- Beliefs and knowledge
- Needs and motivations,
- Attitudes,
- Demographics,
- Intentions,
- Income.

Galarraga Gallastegui adds “consumer satisfaction” to this list.

Belch and Belch cited by Khosla (2010) define consumer behaviour as the process developed while searching, selecting and purchasing, using and evaluating products and services. Khosla states that the consumer “chooses a product which has an image similar to the view he has about himself” (2010:216). While this image is not static and develops with time, it can also be influenced by “the consumer’s perception of his self in the eye of the people around him” (Khosla, S., 2010:216). In other words, if buying environmental products could become recognized as the socially correct thing to do, probably consumer behaviour would change in order to buy what he thinks he is while showing that he is socially accurate with his image. In this regard, social marketing can be envisaged as a major prospect for environmental labels.

The above conclusion highlights the importance of education and of communication by firms and policy makers in translating their green philosophy in a much wider way.

- **Fourth, as regards consumer income, the studies from Anderson and Cunningham (1972) found that psychological and social factors are better predictors of consumer behaviour than economic variables. For the authors, responsible consumers are prepared to pay a higher price for responsible products (1972:31). On the contrary, Loyola (2005) referencing Zimmer (1996) says that there is an important relationship between income and green products choice.**

Polonsky and Rosenberg take this issue to a higher level by saying that the price of green product being higher doesn't necessarily mean that product costs more (2001: 24).

The balance between the cost effectiveness and the product effectiveness reflects in the final consumer experience with green goods (that make him/her feel in line with his/her beliefs) which concludes in an optimal consumer satisfaction.

Galarraga Gallastegui highlights the fact that green or ecolabeled products might not meet criteria such as performance and quality. Whilst referencing Ottoman (1992) he states that "one buys a laundry detergent to get clothes clean, not to save the planet" (2002: 319). In other words, ecolabels need to focus on two different aspects of the product which means that they might need to find some compromise in certain cases.

## Green results of environmental labels, what do we know?

The evaluation of the environmental impact of a product might not be as straight forward and easy as it might seem. Galarraga Gallastegui citing Morris (1997) says that ecolabels might encourage the consumption of more resources and be more adverse for the environment (2005: 321).

In line with the above are the findings of Bougherara et al who introduced in a study dated from 2005 the concept of environmental elasticity developed by Mattoo and Singh in 1994. For these authors an ecolabel can, in some cases, become more harmful to the environment, because the rise of consumption of an ecolabel product can bring more harm than the balanced consumption of ecolabeled and non ecolabeled products.

Their mathematical model is based on the premises that every production will be harmful for the environment. Even in the case of an ecolabeled product, there is an ecological foot print in every production. Georgescu Roegen thoroughly developed this concept in his book, Entropy, Ecology Economy.

In order to counterbalance the above, Rubik and Frankl give a special importance to base ecolabel EPIS on “clear and agreed environmental priorities at national and international level” (2005: 294). In others words, because ecolabels will have a negative impact on the environment, they need to concentrate their benefits on fundamental impacts.

Mention as to be made to the choice of product groups and the criteria developed for those products. Rubik and Frankl say that ecolabels should, preferably choose to certify a symbolic product, a “low hanging fruit” or a product that has a high environmental impact on the environment (2005: 311).

The choice of the product or service group will impact on the criteria which, in turn, will impact the KPI, LCA and communication of results. For example, if the criteria are related to chemical content, it may be very difficult to explain to the consumer which chemicals were banned or why. The consumers are not chemists and the complexity of the explanation disables the goal of EU labelling: “**simple to understand and to use criteria**” (EC No 66/2010: 2015).

Finally, as stressed by the A.I.S.E Charter for Sustainable Cleaning the use made of a sustainable product by the end consumer is one of the key factors for “green results”. For example, in the case of detergents, if the consumer buys a “green product” but overdoses the product or uses high temperatures, the end results of the product is lost. This is the reason why the A.I.S.E Charter for Sustainable Cleaning developed the Cleanright Consumer Information Portal where explanation on sustainable cleaning are available. That way, a green consumer can ensure a better use of its products hence ensuring sustainable practices from the product choice to the product use.

## CONCLUSION

The research for this dissertation started by reading several books related for the most part with the safer/greener planet concept (Stern, N. 2009; Hawken, et al, 1999; Jackson, T. 2011). All the authors agree that the consumer (or the citizen as it should be called) is a central element to implement sustainable policies.

If it is true that consumers are a central part of consumption, sustainable consumption cannot be attained if the consumer has no access to sustainable/green products. Ultimately, this fits into the Marshall theory of supply and demand: if there is no demand for a product, there probably won't have a supply but with no supply there can't be any demand.

Adam Smith in the wealth of nations said that certain products are not necessary (in his example a linen shirt), yet the image that these unnecessary product bring a social one (Smith, A. 1776).

This statement can be transposed to the reality of ecolabels and green products. In fact, if firms could embrace the environmental status of products then probably the percentages of green products and green consumers would increase.

Bansal says that "organizations conform to the implicit expectation of their communities" (2002: 124). This point of view, which I find particularly restrictive, puts business on the "bad student seat" by implying that business are never interested in green compliance if they are not pushed by communities.

Furthermore, the author says that businesses act for two main reasons: economics and institutional pressure (2002: 127).

For her there is a difference of perspective regarding what sustainable development means. These differences are shown below.

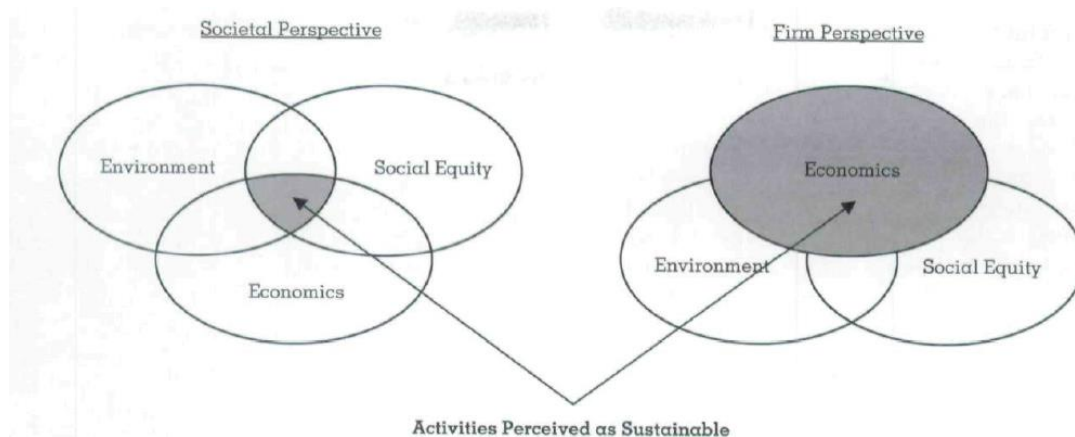


Image 8- Bansal, P. and Roth, K., model for comparison of the societal and firm perspective (2000).

The graphic clearly shows that work still needs to be done in order to bring both perspectives to a same level.

For Bansal only institutionalization (in terms of strong political policies) can bring sustainable development to a homogenous level among stakeholders.

The problem is that environmentally heavy regulations confront some companies (in heavier polluting industries or the ones with older technologies) with the constraints of changing their entire philosophy to a new one that has not yet been widely accepted.

In that sense, Galarraga Gallastegui says that lobby group pressure will impact negatively on the environmental label in the sense that it will tend to aim to reduce its scope (hence reducing its seriousness for other stakeholders) instead of finding a way to include green philosophy in corporate organization (2002: 322).

Moreover, this group pressure would impact negatively in firms that were environmentally proactive and adopted environmental policies. These face costs of environmental management without enjoying full political and societal support. The idea of a lobbying group for cross-industries green companies is further developed in chapter four.

The idea that “most firms are engaged (...) in environmental protection (...) but at little economic expense” (Bansal,P. 2002: 129) needs to be balanced with organization’s economic goals and with return on investment for green firms.

**T**he policy support given to green companies (or to companies wanting to be greener) needs to be further developed in order to compensate the costs of “business greening”. Recommendations from Rubik and Franckl clearly call for the design of incentives in the fee structure (2005: 314).

These incentives are not only linked to cost of the ecolabel certification *per se* but might be extended to other factors such as fiscal incentives.

Rex and Baumann (2006) questioned whether ecolabel schemes were a success or a failure. Their conclusion was that success or failure needed be accessed depending on multiple aspects from consumer recognition and trust, to environmental impact and from market penetration to influence at corporate level.

This dissertation, based on the literature described in this chapter, and taking into account chain reactions between stakeholders, attempts to understand the greening impact of the EUE.

### CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY

**T**he aim of this dissertation, being quite vast, required the use of several research methods.

All started with exploratory studies in order to clarify the researcher's understanding of environmental labels.

This step described by Saunders et al (2009), whilst referencing Adams and Schvaneveldt (1991) arose with the literature review leading from a broad focus (green consumer, green companies, green marketing among others) to a progressively narrower one (specific literature and research on ecolabels).

The researcher used techniques of critical reading in order to ensure that the authors' purpose was recognized and that bias would be minimized (RKC: 2015)

**B**ecause the object of research intended to understand the interaction between different variables, different research strategies were developed thus bringing the research philosophy to a pragmatic view on the use of mixed research methods. The researcher wanted the freedom to use any of the methods, techniques and procedures of both quantitative and qualitative research.

The "mixed method research" (Saunders et al., 2009: 152) was needed in order to study different aspects of the EUE, from macro to micro relevance and solve the problem of insufficient quantitative data about the EUE.

On the one hand, there was the quantitative research by using the EU barometers primary data on the level of knowledge of the EU citizen on the ecolabel and on EU "green mentality". On the other hand, a qualitative research based on interviews and data analysis was developed to evaluate the impact of the EUE in companies or industrial sectors.

**T**he first step taken after the review of the literature was the collection of secondary data (mainly on the internet) uploaded by the EUE stakeholders, from environmental NGOs to consumers association prospects, and from EC documents to stakeholder position papers on the EUE.

The documentary secondary data, defined by Saunders et al as the "written materials such as notices, correspondence, (...) report to stakeholders, (...) administrative and public records" (2009: 258) gave the researcher a first glance at the EUE stakeholders' position on the environmental label.

**B**oth qualitative and quantitative methods were used in an inductive approach in order to build a theory (Saunders et al., 2009: 125).

Inductive reasoning or bottom up approach enables the researcher to build from specific observations (in the interviews) to a broader theory or theories (Social research method: 2015).

Moreover, the inductive method enables "change on research emphasis as the research progresses" (Saunders et al., 2009: 127).



**Q**ualitative approach has been endorsed by many researchers to enable interviewees to narrate their experiences and thus, permit responses to be relatively unconstrained, as opposed to those secured with quantitative research techniques (Butterfield *et al.*, 1996).

Allowing stakeholders to narrate their stories brings to research the unconscious, qualitative phenomena that include details and carry multiple interpretations (Martin *et al.*, 1983).

**Q**ualitative research presents several disadvantages such as potential bias, influence from the researcher and data overload. The quantitative approach was therefore used by the researcher to support, whenever possible, the findings generated and to minimize the negative aspects of qualitative research.

**F**inally, one last quantitative study was developed with the supermarket study (annex 4). The research intended to understand if the EUE certification impacted on the price of the products. The researcher visited three retailers in the Brussels area:

- Delhaize- Medium size Belgian retailer
- Colruyt- First prize retailer
- CORA- Pan-European retailer

The researcher knows that, due to the low number of supermarket researched, the quantitative study cannot serve as proof. Yet, the researcher wanted to have an idea of “how easy it was to find EUE products” for a regular consumer.

**I**n conclusion, the researcher adopted a non-positivist approach to investigate small samples in depth and focus on meanings and facts.

## RESEARCH PROCEDURE

**A** first identification of stakeholders was done by looking at the actors represented at the EUEB.

They were:

- Consumers association,
- Environmental NGO,
- Industry representatives,
- Employers federations,
- National authorities for certification,
- DG Environment policy officers for the EUE.

A first contact was made with the above, from which resulted the first interviews with National Authorities (Spain and Belgium) and with industry representatives (Eurocommerce).

Thereafter, EU consumer associations were contacted and 3 interviews were scheduled with three consumer associations: a French, one, a Spanish one and a Portuguese one.

Furthermore, ecolabeled companies were contacted which resulted in 4 interviews: One with an SME certified with the EUE for tourist services, 1 with Peltracom a EUE certified Belgian company from the horticultural sector with 400 employees, 1 with a company that chose an ISO type III certification and, finally, an international company that has no environmental certification.

Another interview, scheduled with an industry representative that developed a type III label, was also part of the sample.

Finally, an interview to bring the insight of DG Market was conducted.

In total, the sample is of 12 interviews.

**A** first email was sent to the interviewees where the research was explained. This email was intended to briefly present the researcher and her project, to acknowledge the importance of the recipient in the EUE process and to request an interview of at least half an hour on the research subject. (Annex 1)

**W**hen the email's recipient replied and was interested in participating in the research, the interview questions were developed and sent to the future interviewees. This step was intended to ensure the preparation of the interview on both sides (annex 2).

The questions were developed based on the literature review and (where possible) from available position papers regarding the EUE. For example, the preparation of an interview of a private sector federation representative was based on publicly available secondary data.

**A** study-specific semi-structured set of open-ended questions was constructed so as to enable interviewees to contribute their personal and professional perspectives and also to understand the relationship of previously identified variables impacting the EUE (Saunders et al.,2009: 322).

**C**losed-ended questions were developed in a unstructured way only when a direct answer was needed to reinforce an idea (Saunders et al., 2009).

**F**inally, due to the fact that the interviewees were from different sectors and with different points of view, several interview questions were developed specifically for their background or sectors while others were the same for all interviewees. It was important for the researcher to understand if there was a difference between the position of an interviewee depending on the fact that the researcher questioned the professional representative or the citizen. These questions with the intention to reach the “person” and not the professional were the last ones from the interview and were subject to time availability (annex 2).

**T**he various types of biases referenced by Saunders et al. represented one of the major problems for the researcher and much care was taken in the preparation of the interviews in order to minimise the researcher personal beliefs on the EUE.

The preparation included research on the stakeholders, past positioning on the EUE and extensive literature review. Moreover, because the interviews were conducted in French, English, Portuguese and Spanish, the researcher requested the services of a translator when in doubt about the precise meaning of a term.

The translator was also of help in incorporating the findings made in foreign language to this dissertation.

**T**he first minutes of conversation were generally centred on the presentation of the MBA program and the university supporting it, then an explanation on the dissertation project followed and, finally the interviewee was reassured by guarantying confidentiality when needed.

Finally, all interviews were recorded in order to ensure the interviewer focus on the interview and also to ensure that the tone of voices and hesitations could be kept for further interpretations (Saunders et al., 2005).

**A**s regards the quantitative supermarket research, the procedure was the following:

- Identify the product groups where EUE certified product were available in the retailer
- Compare the prices of EUE certified products with:
  - Non-certified products for the same category
  - Certified products with another certification than the EUE, when available
- Take pictures (when authorized) of the location of eco products.

## **ANALYZING THE QUALITATIVE DATA**

**T**he first step to analyse the qualitative data was to transcribe the interviews in order to summarize the main findings. Moreover, the researcher developed an interview checklist (Annex 3) in which the reactions and the general mood of the interviewee were reported.

**T**his strategy enabled the researcher to confirm the “netnography” approach (SAGE: 335) and grounded theory approach.

**F**urthermore, all the primary data that the interviewee made available (if any) was compared to the literature review and with the secondary data by including it in the initial mind mapping. The latter ensured visually summarized data from which a pattern matching with the bibliography could be developed hence concluding in a confirmation or information of prior studies’ findings.

**F**inally, the research results were sent to all interviewees in order to give them the chance to evaluate the research and to ensure that the confidentiality measures were appropriately taken.

The interviews took place between the 1<sup>st</sup> of December 2014 and the 30<sup>th</sup> of January 2015.

## **ANALYZING THE QUANTITATIVE DATA**

**F**or each of the EUE product category available, the following steps were taken in order to analyse the quantitative data:

- Insert the prices in an Excel table (Annex 4),
- Reach conclusions on price impact for the end consumer of the EUE certification when compared to other green products and not certified products.

**F**urthermore, during this quantitative research, a special attention was given to the position of the Eco-products on the retailer’s shelves in order to check the visibility given to such products. The results of the above are available on Chapter 4.

## CHAPTER 4

### FINDINGS – THE IMPACT OF THE EUE ON COMPANIES AND THE CONSUMER

#### INTRODUCTION

The results of the inductive qualitative research showed that the EUE is perceived as having impacted both positively and negatively on the companies or the industry organisations representing European Companies.

On the overall positive aspects, all interviewees considered that the work of DG ENV and the JRC has been excellent in terms of communication among stakeholders (hearing all points of view) and all underlined their understanding of limits to what the EUE team can be expected to do with the budget and workforce means available.

#### 1. STRENGTH OF THE EUE

- Customer retention and recognition

Peltracom, a company with a EUE certified product, said that, for them, being certified with the EU ecolabel was clearly beneficial in two different aspects.

- First, for customer retention, since the EUE was sometimes specifically requested by their customers to maintain the business relationship.
- Second, for cost effectiveness, since the existence of one single logo to reach all end-consumers across Europe brings down costs e.g. those related to the packaging development.

For Styles et al., “Retailers are strategically positioned to leverage environmental improvement over product supply chains through actions targeted at suppliers and consumers” (2012: 135). In other words, retailers act as a link between a supplier and the consumer, influencing both of them.

In the case of the supplier, this influence might be carried through environmental benchmarks and requirements. One of the proposals made by Styles et al. in order to improve green supply chain sustainability is to target at least a 10% share of eco products in priority categories.

For De Pelsmacker et al (2005) one of the reasons for green consumption being low is related to the lack of availability of green/labelled products. In that sense, representatives of the Belgian National Authority made a proposal for the EUE products to be put on shelves specifically identified as ecological winners. This suggestion is already in place in some retailers as it might be seen on the picture on the right. CORA, a trans-European retailer created an aisle specially dedicated to environmental friendly products where EUE labelled products are visibly available.

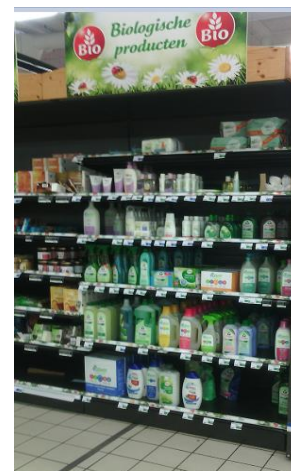


Image 9- Picture of Green alley at Cora Belgium (02/2015)

- The recognition of the EUE in an Europe without borders

**B**oth the Belgium and the Spanish National Authorities highlighted that the companies wanting to be certified choose the EUE because the label is recognized across borders.

The EUE is usually the chosen label in cases in which the producer of a good wants to sell it in several EU countries or in those where a retailer established in cross markets, either driven by customer preference or producer strategy, wants to make products available in several countries.

In some product categories, this aspect is particularly interesting. For example, for static services such as the EUE for tourism services, the tourism operator might opt for a national or regional label that is better recognized by their customers. In that sense, the strength and the recognition of the EUE is a major factor in terms of choice.

This aspect has another positive effect in terms of the cost of certification. The EUE enables a company selling in several EU countries to bear one single certification fee.

- The communication amongst stakeholders

**T**he majority of the interviewees highlighted the fact that the participation of several actors at the EUE meeting was an advantage in the sense that several points of view bring a wider perspective of the EUE.

One interviewee said: *“During these meetings, my job is to ensure that the scope of the certification is narrowed to ensure a smaller impact on our industry. The guys from the NGO’s will have another point of view. It’s part of the game. At the end of the day, I can bring all this discussion back to my company”*.

**T**he interviewees also regretted that this melting pot was limited to the participation in a criteria evaluation process.

One interviewee said: *“I don’t understand the reason why there is not an annual EUE fair where producer and consumers could meet in order to exchange their views”*.

**A**nother interviewee underlined the fact that the EC should communicate EUE results in a much better way. For example, an annual conference on results and future prospects would develop bonds amongst actors and knowledge that could be brought to the company level.

- The fact that it is a label controlled by the EU is an insurance of quality and independence

**T**he EUE being controlled by the EC was, for most interviewees a quality assurance. One of them said: *“For us, the most important factor is that the label is not controlled by any industry. I mean, it comes from the EC so our consumers can be quite confident about the positive impact of our product on the environment. It’s not like if we made green claim”*.

Moreover, the EUE websites states: “It’s not an environmental label for industry by industry. The scheme involves certification as well as compliance checks by independent, qualified scientists, and is trusted by consumers” (EUE:2015).

Yet, as stated on the above point, industry is part of the criteria development process both by participating in the EUEB meetings and by bringing its insight to criteria development.

**T**he majority of interviewees replied that they were very satisfied with the participation of the industry in the labelling process. They highlighted the fact that DG ENV and the JRC were extremely pro-active in accepting industry inputs while keeping their environmental goal.

**A**nother interviewee said on the same subject: *“Even if we don’t agree with the criteria that are developed for our sector, we know that in the future we will have to get ready to adopt them with or without the certification. You see, the EUE is voluntary and mandatory at the same. It’s mandatory because it will set a criterion for environmental quality that we all need to develop if we want to stay ahead of our competitors”.*

As in the case of CSR, that had to be an act of free will, free of constraints for companies (Kinderman, D., 2011:41), ecolabeling is also based on free will. The company either wants to be certified or it doesn’t. This free will enables the industries and companies to have a multiple choice of environmental procedures.

**F**or Eurocommerce, the Brussels based Federation representing the retail, wholesale and international trade sectors “retailers [are] interested in the scheme, the EU eco-label criteria are often used for benchmarking or simply as criteria in calls for tender” (Eurocommerce 2008). Like in the studies of Houe and Grabot the position of Eurocommerce is that the certification requirements will, in the end, show the path to tighter environmental legislation (2008).

Moreover, the same position paper also highlights that businesses must be free to decide which label works best for them.

Eurocommerce is very supportive of the EUE (Eurocommerce, 2008). In the 2008 position paper, they acknowledged that there are many ecolabels in the market. Each certification referring to different criteria to ensure environmental excellence, business should be free to decide which certification is more appropriate for them. In that sense, business might choose an ecolabel certification that is recognized in its country (e.g. better recognized by the consumer), or it can chose an ecolabel based on environmental concerns directly related to the business or decide to develop its own eco-label or environmental schemes but, the EUE drives industries to prepare an environmental model.

*“In the end, despite the solution you choose, the EUE will certainly show the way. Greening is on the move and my bet is that it will not stop. We’ll need to get over it”.*

- The bureaucratic organization of the company

**O**ne of the interviewees, an SME, said: *“For us, the EUE was pretty difficult to adopt in the beginning but, in the long run, the processes we developed helped us in having a clear view of our goals”.*

Moreover, they highlighted that after being EUE certified, they were able to apply for a regional certification without any further development cost. *"The EUE is so complete that if you have it, you can have any certification you want - with the customers we are targeting, we need to have a strong environmental commitment"*.

Finally, they said that for them, the EUE was a way to "educate" their customer. If the latter was not aware of the label, it was their goal to explain what the flower meant: *"We are a small structure and, because we are close and in direct contact with our customers, we take the time to explain why choosing us protects the environment."*

For this company, the EUE certification brought knowledge that they now use in customer communication. They are now more aware of their impact and they use this awareness to create a new marketing strategy that binds them with their customers. Moreover, since they are certified for a service and not a product, the certification also enabled cost reduction in terms of energy and general waste. For them it's a win-win situation gained through social marketing.

**S**ocial marketing as defined by Khosla is related to "getting the idea across to consumers rather than selling something" (2010:215).

In the case of the EUE, in order to develop sustainable consumer behaviour, the development of a social marketing campaign is of the utmost importance. In fact, by ensuring that the EUE is not only a standard of environmental excellence but also a way of being socially recognized for a personal concern, it addresses consumers self perception. By bringing together her/his "self" and "social" image, social marketing achieve a greater impact. "Act locally and change globally" is the moto of the above company.

- The overall cost of the label is not that high

*"The costs of the EUE certification in our country are limited. Our national authority is very proactive"* said a company based in Belgium.

**T**here two different aspects to the question of costs. First, the costs of certification were not deemed a problem "per se". Second the costs of testing to ensure the environmental quality of products could become a problem: *"the criteria are being revised. They will probably become stricter and have more criteria.. If the cost of testing becomes too high, then it may become unbearable for our company"*.

The representative from the company said that the equation of costs needed to be balanced. On the one hand, they were saving in terms of the packaging because one single packaging production was sufficient to reach the entire EU market. These savings helped to bear the certification costs. On the other hand, if the costs of certification were increased, this competitive advantage would be lost.



## 2. WEAKNESSES OF THE EUE

- A problem of workload and costs

**T**here are two conflicting points of view depending on the size of the company. During the interviews, the Belgian National authorities for the EUE certification highlighted the fact that the cost of the EUE was not a problem for companies. This confirms the findings from Lange et al who studied the coexistence of two environmental labels in Nordic countries as well as the results of the EVER study ordered by DG Environment in 2005.

On the another hand, the Spanish National Authority responsible for the EUE in the Castilla and la Mancha region said that, for some companies, the cost of the EUE Ecolabel was prohibitive, not in terms of the certification itself but in regards to the cost of testing (in the chemical case). This position is in line with Hillary, R (2004) who focused her research in the SME's. She says: "SMEs found that more resources than expected, in terms of cost, time and/or skills were required for EMS implementation" (2006).

Apart from the fact that the crisis is hitting the Spanish economy harder than the Belgian one, the truth is that there are more dedicated resources in some countries than others. The Belgium National Authority has 2 employees fully dedicated to the EU ecolabel certification while in Castilla and la Mancha Region the EUE authority has 1 employee who, besides the EUE, deals with other national environmental certification. The support given to companies wanting the EUE certification will certainly be much different in the two examples. The timeframe for a successful certification will certainly be different as well.

**S**till on the theme of the resources, the European Federation of Cleaning Industries which represents the cleaning employers in Europe, highlights the fact that, for their sector of 64.5 billion of turnover, 76.4% of which consists of small companies with less than 10 employees, there is not enough manpower to develop and follow environmental procedures.

In other words, a company with less than 10 employees will find very difficult to have staff, which is already multi-functional, dedicated to the EUE certification (Hillary, R.,2004).

Manuel Denia, from the Spanish national authority for the EUE exposed the problem in a quite clear way during our interview: *"It is more work for companies and there is no clear reward neither by the consumer neither by local authorities"* or, as said by Iraldo et al. there is a "scarce customer awareness/interest and a lack of recognition by public institutions" (2010:5).

- Technical and scientific basis and relevance of criteria

**T**wo of the private actors stressed the need for KPI in order to clearly evaluate the EUE impact on the environment.

The major problem was:" *We have the EUE certification in one of our products. We would like to have more because our customers request it. The problem is that the certification criteria of the products we have available would reduce the quality of our*

*production. The end consumer will have an environmentally friendly product that does not work". The same interviewee said that, in that particular product, the problem was one of the components that was banned by the EUE. "If we don't use it, the quality of the product will decrease drastically. More, the scientific data we presented show that it is better in terms of the environmental footprint to put a little bit of this component than to keep on producing something that will, in the end, increase the consumption".*

That particular company perceived itself being in a position in which it needed to "protect" their consumer from the certification. *"If my product is EUE certified, I will lose my customer."* For them KPI would be a way to prove that some labelled products are more aggressive on the environment than non-labelled products.

**A**nother actor from the public sector said: *"Sometimes, it's not possible to make an environmentally friendly product that is also socially friendly. In these cases, the JRC and DG ENV should work on a compromise".*

- The lack of marketing

All interviewees agreed that the EUE lacked marketing actions.

When asked why the marketing actions were in such a small number, they said that, at some point, a marketing actions needs to be developed by all the stakeholders of the EUE.

The European Commission, for example, hasn't developed EU wide marketing actions during the last five years. Most interviewees tend to feel that it should be the responsibility of the Commission to support its label. All agreed that a European wide campaign explaining to EU citizens the importance of the EUE would be a way of kick starting consumer awareness and search for the flower. For Allison and Carter, "education and awareness raising should be done primarily via associated tools and marketing rather than the logo per se" (2000: 24). Moreover, for the above authors, the costs of promotion and marketing are to be borne by third party organizers, in order words, the EU Commission and the National authority.

**J**urgen, B. about this question says: "Promotion of the different schemes varies considerably. The EC Eco-label is currently promoted at individual member state level. Criticisms that promotion is insufficient must be balanced against available revenue" (2000:15).

It is true that any promotion depends on the budget and DG Environment claims that no budget was available, during the last five years, for promotion of the EUE. Yet, marketing can be made in different terms and references to the EUE in policy documents are a way to raise the awareness of the stakeholders.

**O**ne of the main findings in relation with this issue is that every stakeholder thinks it is the responsibility of another to bear the marketing costs. One industry representative said: *"Companies already have the cost of certification. Why should they bear the cost of marketing a service they do not own?"*. DG ENV, in an informal telephone interview said: *"We would love to do marketing but we do not have the budget"*. On the National Authority side, they either did not have a budget available or they felt it was not responsibility to do so.

The EUE is referred to in the sustainable consumption and production policy as one of the main tools to achieve sustainability. Most interviewees felt that there were not

enough references to the EUE on other EU policies impacting sustainable development such as EU 2020.

**The interviewees felt that the Commission was the first to forget about the European Environmental Label.**

- The lack of process consistency with the certification depending of the National authorities that takes care of it.

Each member state has the freedom to develop the EUE within its borders. France has been supporting it, the UK in the voice of one interviewee is: *"not interested"*, in northern countries the EUE lives with other environmental labels. In Italy and Portugal, both countries without national labels, the EUE is considered a success in the first and seem to find more difficulties in the second.

There is no rule in regard to the promotion and adoption of the EUE across Europe. This means that if a country is more supportive, its companies and general consumer will be more aware. The contrary is also true. If a country is less supportive, the EU flower will blend among other labels and will be just one more sign in a packaging. The interviewees stressed the need to harmonize the support given to the EUE in all member states.

Finally, Interviewees also stressed the fact that the interpretation of the EUE certification procedure varied across member states. This means that depending on interpretation, the certification could take more or less time and could be more or less difficult for companies. This, in turn, is thought to bring unfairness into the certification process and to create a problem of accountability for the EUE. One interviewee stressed: *"that's unfair. A foreign company can choose any member state it wants for the EUE certification. Me, I have to get the certification in the country where my company is registered. The problem is, procedure here takes forever! There is only one guy taking care of it"*.

The researcher had the chance to check this reality during research. The Belgian National Authority has two employees fully dedicated to the EUE whilst the Spanish National Authority for the Castilla and la Mancha region had only one person that took care of all environmental issues.

The support given by both National Authorities to the companies wanting to be certified will certainly be different. Another example is the Portuguese National Authority, the email address available on the EUE website is incorrect and in the Portuguese webpage of the EUE certification authority it is anything but simple to discover a contact. Perhaps here lies one of the reasons for the modest results of the EUE in Portugal.

- The time taken for the revision of criteria

The Belgian National authority said during our interview that a lot of companies that started the procedure for the EUE had given up during the process because it took up more time to be certified with the EUE than with other environmental labels.

In the case of a company wanting to communicate their environmental credo to consumers, time is of essence.

The Belgian authority reported several cases in the framework of tourist accommodation certification in which the company decided to go for a regional label where the certification procedure took less time and meant less workload.

**T**he European Chemical Industry Council (CEFIC: 2012) the European Association of Craft, Small and Medium Sized Enterprises (EUAPME: 2008) as well as Eurocommerce and the National Authorities Representatives all agree in saying that EUE procedures are too long, too political, and not “business friendly” enough.

Procedural development is identified as a problem not only for the companies wanting to be certified, but also in case of criteria development and revision within the certification board.

Another example given by the Belgian National Authority was the EUE for televisions. Because the television industry is fast paced and knows intensive technological development, EUE criteria are deemed most often to quickly become obsolete or redundant (for example in the case of the energy efficiency criteria). Because the procedure for reviewing criteria is slow, this means that the excellence of the label is not attained and the industry cannot be convinced nor use the plus value of certification. In the above case, being certified wouldn't translate into an actual improvement for the consumer.

This situation, that is anecdotic, tends to happen in several product categories. The representatives of the National Authorities interviewed both highlighted that they have been losing EUE applications because of the procedures. Furthermore, the length of procedures sometimes harm EUE certified companies in cases in which they have to wait for the EU Ecolabel change to be authorized to adapt their production.

*“It is so frustrating” said one of the interviewed actors “Your company decides to be ecolabeled to show the consumer you are environmentally pro-active and then you find yourself in a situation in which your production is not green because the criteria are waiting to be reviewed. Can you imagine the impact on our company if this situation finds its way to the press?”.*

The above referred interviewee decided, in the end, to chose the certification of a type III label: *“at least they know that business needs to move fast. I mean, they are the business”.*

- Not enough incentives... On both sides.

**T**he consumer association interviewed agreed that there was not enough incentives for the end consumer to buy EUE labelled products. Reine Claude Madder said: *“Imagine a French consumer that goes to a retailer. The quantity of labels available is incredible. Even if they want to protect the environment, they don't know what to choose”.*

For her, there is a need to “clean” the market of environmental claims. Moreover, the “official” labels should be more supported and communicated. *“It has been our daily battle, at the association, to ensure that our members are aware of what they buy”.*

It is extremely difficult for the end consumer to know the real environmental cost of a product, mainly because no company has concrete data to inform the costumer of such.

Georgescu Roegen spoke thoroughly about this issue in his book about de-growth (in French in the references: La décroissance, Entropie. Ecologie. Economie).

While referencing Solow (1973), Georgescu Roegen says that if prices were correct there would be no pollution. It means that if the prices of a product reflected its natural or environmental costs, most of the products available today in the market would see a shift in price. For example, imported products would probably be much more expensive than they are today because their carbon footprint is bigger than products made in Europe.

Also, environmentally friendly products would be less expensive than the ones that are not. When asked about this issue, most actors said that it would be a great way to develop green consumption. The EESC said, on a position paper, that the quality of sustainable products has to be valorised if you want to beat “unsustainable product” in the consuming game.

**F**or the Belgian company, the Eco-cheques were a good example of an incentive that can be applied at EU level. Eco-cheques are “vouchers to buy green products in Belgium – [they are] included in the [employment] contract. Launched in 2009, Eco cheques’ objective was twofold: to serve as yet another way for Belgian companies to increase employee benefits all while paying less taxes and to encourage more ecological consumption” (The Bulletin: 2015).

- The lack of trust in the EU institutions

**T**he last EU barometer (83:2014) about the public opinion in the EU shows a striking result about the trust on the EU institution by EU citizens. For the first time, as per the survey’s results, less than a third of Europeans trust the European Commission (and European institutions in general) whilst trust in national bodies has been growing in most member states.

EUE is a European label, supported by the European commission and developed by DG Environment. If the Europeans do not trust their institutions, how can they trust the label and how see it as the preferred label in their consumption choice?

In cases like Italy or Portugal where no national environmental label exists, the EUE stands as the official one. Yet in other EU countries like Germany, Sweden, Finland, France, Spain (amongst others), where national environmental labels coexist with the EUE, the consumers could probably choose the national which is better known, has more product choice and the one they find to be more trustworthy.

- Profusion of green claims, other environmental labels and consumer information

**M**rs. Reine Claude Madder (the president of the French consumer’s association (Association Consommation, Logement et Cadre de Vie) highlighted that, in the French market, the consumer struggles with the presence of too many labelled products and with the lack of knowledge and time to make a decision.

She said: “*You have green claims, products with green packaging design, and a huge number of labels and logos and nobody knows what they stand for. How can the end-consumer choose wisely if (s)he doesn’t know what (s)he buys?*” In other words, how

can the consumer understand the impact her/his consumption has on the environment if (s)he is not aware of the difference between environmental labels.

In Reiser and Simons (2005) and Collins (2011), the consumer should be given the chance to understand the effective impact of consumption on the environment.

Strangely, amongst ISO type I, II and III products certifications, none seems to be interested in informing the end consumer. Moreover, in certain cases the packaging of the product does not even use “green design” to inform the consumer of the green criteria of the product.



Image 10- Dreft detergent- Website picture

For example the A.I.S.E Charter for Sustainable Cleaning, an ISO type III certification, that is used by some of the most well-known brands in cleaning products (such in the example in the left) has no information on the packaging about the KPI that they have developed. In fact, their packaging is used to promote another product of the brand. The A.I.S.E logo is only available in the back. It references “sustainability” but does not explain why this product is sustainable.




Image 11- Froggy detergent- Website picture

In the case of EUE products (such as the Froggy brand), the only information available is the EUE logo and nothing else. There is a sentence saying that it is an environmentally friendly product without informing the end consumer of the reason why this product is more friendly than another one.



Image 12- Ecover detergent- picture

By contrast, ECOVER a non-certified company producing and selling green cleaning products developed labels to inform the consumer of its claims. Using the front and the back of the packaging, several icons serve the intention of communicating

with the consumer. For example, the leaf  means that the ingredients are plant based and friendly to the environment. A complete description of each icon is available on their website (ECOVER: 2015)

One of the EUE actors interviewed said that instead of aiming to reach 10% of the products, the EUE should go for 90% of the products by developing a certification for and with companies. Yet, this is not the choice of the flower.

There are several ISO type I, II or III certifications available to companies in Europe. Most of them develop KPI, ASP and CSP for their sector. When refusing the direct competition with other certifications, the EUE might lose some certifications but, **gains on being considered the star and a reference amid certifications.**

An example of the above is the A.I.S.E Charter for Sustainable Cleaning. The Charter is as serious as the EUE and the sustainable consumer looking for cleaning products will not be deceived if they chose to buy products with either the Charter logo or with the EUE one.

During the interview with the A.I.S.E. representatives, the main conclusion was that the Charter was a tool to steer environmental progress in the detergents industry. This industry scheme targets to steer progress for the majority of the industry and deliver results for the mass market. It includes processes at manufacturing level, at product design level, at consumption levels, with independent audit and KPI monitoring.

Some of their product design related criteria's are comparable to those of the EUE whilst others, related to the manufacturing of the products, have been developed specifically to enhance KPI with which they can evaluate the effective impact of their industry in the environment.

Moreover, the Charter is more of a sustainable certification than an environmental one (although the latter is highly valued in the Charter's criteria's).

Finally, when compared with the EUE, the charter has three main advantages:

- First, it acts at the “consumer” level with the development of a website that explains to consumers how to be environmentally friendly while using the products certified by the charter.
- Second, because the Charter is made by the industry and for the industry, it draws on the advantage of new developments of the companies' investments in research for greening products with independent verification. Moreover, these developments can quickly be translated in the criteria's.
- Third, it covers manufacturing processes.

The graphic below shows A.I.S.E's views on the EUE.

The EUE appears as a label of excellence reaching for the top 20% of the market of detergents, while A.I.S.E charter targets a larger spectrum.

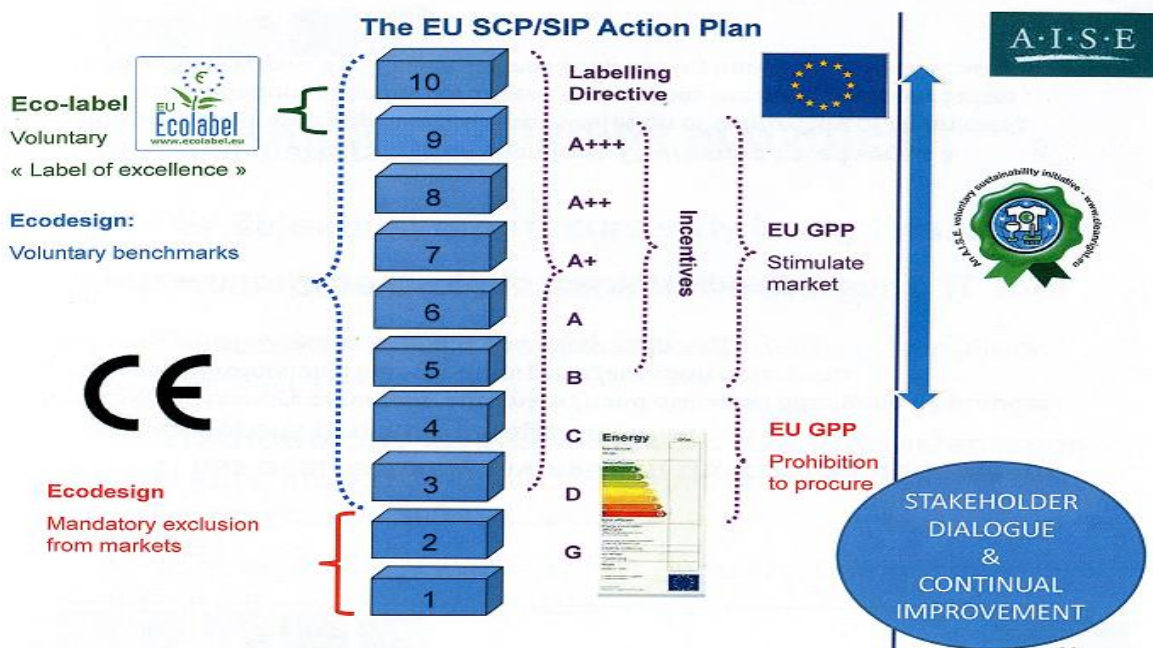


Image 13 : Report on A.I.S.E activities to steer sustainable progress

The EUE could find effective ways of communicating environmental goals to the end consumer by taking example in the A.I.S.E consumer website (Cleanright website) where techniques on the sustainable use of products and sustainable cleaning are clearly explained.

### 3. PRODUCT AVAILABILITY AND PRICE RESEARCH.

- Availability, product visibility and price

In the path of preparing this dissertation, a simple exercise was developed. The researcher went to three main supermarkets in Brussels with the intention to find how easy it was to buy house products with the EUE label.

As identified by Pelsmacker et al (2005), the availability of EUE certified products is one of the main variables that will impact on the consumer's ability to buy green products.

The main findings of the quantitative research, which are available in Annex 4, are as follows:

- 1) When the retailer act as a producer and has its own EUE certified brand (such as in the case of Delhaize or CORA), the certified product is:
  - a. Better located- in the shelves that are directly at "eyes" range.
  - b. The price of the product is highly competitive and, most often, lower than the price of non-certified products.
  - c. The price of the retailers product is lower than the price of other EUE certified products
- 2) When the retailer does not act as producer, the cost of the EUE certified products is less competitive when compared to non-certified product.
- 3) When the retailer does not act as producer, the location of the EUE certified products is usually not at "eyes" level, in other words, the consumer has to look up and down to find the EUE certified product.
- 4) In Belgian retailers in the case of cleaning products, the only EUE certified brand available is FROGGY or the products produced by the retailer.
- 5) None of the main known brands had the EUE certification, and in some cases EUE certified product was not an available (annex 4).
- 6) Most of the well-known brands of cleaning products had the A.I.S.E charter logo.

In conclusion, the consumer might want to buy labelled products. Yet, if you don't have time to look for them in a busy supermarket where labelled product are hard to find, you will probably chose another product with a simple green claim and without an official certification.



## CHAPTER 5 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### Overall conclusions

**A**ll interviewees stated that the main actors of the EUE are the companies and that they will be ones bringing the EUE to the consumer. Because environmental labels type I are voluntary, companies need to find an advantage to be certified with the EUE.

On the other hand, the EUE is a label of excellence. This means fundamentally that the EUE goal should not be the number of companies that have the logo (although it is fundamental as a performance indicator of the EUE) but instead, the EUE should keep on leading the way in the path of environmental certification.

In this regard, the evaluation made on the EUE by all interviewed actors was very positive.

**In other words, the EUE has been extremely successful in greening chain action on companies.**

The results on the consumer are more questionable. On the one hand, the retailers, acting as companies, producers and customers have been increasingly requesting the EUE. On the other hand, the lack of quantitative data does not allow robust conclusions on the impact of the EUE on the end consumer let alone the environment. Nonetheless, the fact that the number of certified products grows every year means that more and more products will be available to the end consumer

**F**inally, the researcher thinks that the EUE needs to go a step further and ensure the greening of the whole company in order to support the results gained with the greening of production.

**I**n conclusion, there are no data available to support that one certification is better than the other. The fact that the A.I.S.E Charter comes from the industry does not necessarily make it less valuable than the EUE. Likewise, the fact that ECOVER decided not to be certified does not mean that their environmental results are poorer than those of a certified company. In fact they all have different targets, aims, objectives and philosophies. Yet they all contribute, at different levels, to the SCP action plan.

Instead of engaging comparisons between environmental labels, the researcher feels that more work has to be done to fight green washing and unproven green claims which discredit the work of industries, companies and policy actors in greening societies.

## CONCLUSION ON A PRIVATE THIRD PARTY CERTIFICATION OPTION

**T**he EUE and the EUEB represent a joint venture of stakeholders, from policy actors to environment protection representatives and business actors, with the common objective to lead the way in environmental development certification.

No other certification has this kind of “melting pot” available and this was recognized by all interviewed actors as one of the main strengths of the EUE.

As a bottom line, all interviewees agreed that the companies with the EUE will continue using it and the ones without will, if no change is made on the EUE procedure, see the flower as a certification to be closely followed, but will probably chose other certifications which are more in line with their business philosophy or with their marketing needs.

**I**n terms of the possible development of third party private solutions for EUE certifications, most interviewees referred that they were not in favour of taking the EUE away from the EU institutions.

This proposal, appeared in the EVER study (2005:105) and tends to be supported by some stakeholders based on the argument that the political agenda would be left out of the certification which could lead to faster procedures, would count on a specific budget for marketing actions and ensure a uniform implementation across all EU countries.

Yet, if the “political agenda” associated with the EU environmental label was to be left out of certification, then the EUE could lose its ability to be ahead of the market (or could lose its excellence factor).

Most actors felt that EUE teams **at DG ENV and at the JRC should be reinforced with the budget and means ensure the manpower needed for faster procedures and for marketing actions. Every interviewee highly appreciated the work made by both teams.**

Finally, in terms of lobbying and influences, it is this researcher point of view that across the industries, labelled companies should be represented at the EUEB table in order to bring the point of view of certified companies.

“Best in class” should be heard and their appreciation should enter the equation of the EUE developments.

**F**or the researcher, there is no evidence of lobbying having a negative impact on the EUE. Lobbying bears in this instance diverse faces from industry lobbying to environmental lobbying. If done within the rules of the art, lobbying might be the tool that will bring to light different points of view hence bringing stronger ownership to the final result.

## CONCLUSION ON THE PRICE IMPACT AND POSITIONING OF THE EUE CERTIFIED PRODUCTS (ANNEX 4)

**A**s a general conclusion, in the majority of product categories, the cost of EUE certified products is at the same level as products that have no environmental certification.

When the EUE products are from the retailer's own brand, the price of the product is usually much lower than that of non-certified products from the competition.

In the visited Belgian retailers, the EUE certified cleaning products were always less expensive than ECOVER cleaning products. Yet, a conscious consumer might prefer ECOVER because the brand informs the latter of the impacts of the product on the environment.



Image 14- Detergent alley- Cora Belgium

Moreover, the positioning of EUE certified retailers brands is at eye level in clear price competition with non-certified products. Other EUE certified brands (when available) are usually in upper or lower positions. Finally, at CORA, in the case of "Indoor Paints", a major highlight was done to the retailers EUE certified own brand with half an aisle fully dedicated to the latter yet, CORA was the only retailer where this product category was available.



Image 15- Towels alley- Cora Belgium

In the case of bath towels, the EUE certified brand was, as in the first case, given prominence to with few other options available for this product category.



In certain product categories, such as "printing paper" the prices of EUE labelled goods are much higher than non-certified goods.

Except in the case of CORA that had an aisle dedicated to environmentally friendly products, certified products do not have a specific place that ensures that the green consumer will find them easily. For the green consumer, this constitutes an added difficulty because most often eco-labelled products are not at eye level. Can you spot the certified product in the picture on the right?



Froggy, EUE certified brand is above eye level, on the right hand corner. He is in direct competition with other brands that are better known (in the sense that they have been part of the consumer shopping cart for more time).

16- Detergents positioning- Cora Belgiu

Image

Finally, in terms of product availability, none of the visited retailers had the entire EUE product category available (in terms of products expected to be available in a retailer), as can be seen in the table below where “Green” shows that there is at least one EUE product available.

EUE Product Category	CORA	DELHAIZE	COLRUYT
Soap/Shampoos/Hair Conditioner			
All-purpose cleaners			
sanitary cleaners			
Sanitary cleaners			
Detergents for dishwashers			
Hand dishwashing detergents			
Laundry detergents			
Textiles products			
Footwear			
Paints and varnishes			
Imaging equipment		This retailer does not sell this kind of products	This retailer does not sell this kind of products
Personal computers		This retailer does not sell this kind of products	This retailer does not sell this kind of products
Notebook computers		This retailer does not sell this kind of products	This retailer does not sell this kind of products
Televisions		This retailer does not sell this kind of products	This retailer does not sell this kind of products
Growing media* and soil improvers			
Light Sources			
Tissue paper			
Copying and graphic paper			

Image 17- Availability of EUE labeled products

**A**lthough it is true that, in terms of the final consumer, the more EUE labelled products available, the higher the probability of the consumer to buy the product. In terms of the quantitative supermarket research carried out, a Belgian consumer needs to go to at least three different retailers to find a little bit more than 50% of EUE certified products in the product categories that are usually in retailers.

On the other hand, the already referenced positive impact on companies, ensure that many non-certified products that reach the end-consumer are already impacted by the EUE (in the sense that companies wanting to gain “green competitive advantage” (Argument et al., 1998; McAloone, 1998; van Hemel, 1998), will follow the EUE certification closely.

**In other words, the EUE can impact the end-consumer choice for green products even if the latter doesn't know the EUE.**

## RECOMMENDATION ABOUT PRODUCT AND SERVICE GROUPS, LCA and KPI

**I**n terms of product or services groups, most interviewees agreed that a better job needs to be done.

**T**here is no interest in developing product groups that need to have fast certification procedures to accompany a speeded scientific development (such in the case of TVs or PCs). However, the development of product or services categories with the goal of complementing already successful categories might be a good idea. For example, the development of the EUE for cleaning services might find a market niche complementing the EUE for cleaning products. Not only this would have a positive aspect in terms of workload - because part of the criteria are already known and partly developed - but also the sector is already informed about what the EUE is.

**A**nother example could be the EUE for construction operators which could be linked to the EUE for construction products. These criteria's are also interesting in terms of the final consumer. If you are a "green" consumer and want to have your house built in a sustainable way, the EUE should be able to ensure it from products to services.

Moreover, in terms of the EUE for the services, it includes criteria from sustainable labels (or, in other words, with focus societal sustainability) which can be communicated to consumers in an easier way hence embracing the goal of the EUE.

**T**he impact of EUE results needs to be better assessed, mostly in terms of KPI and needs to be available on the website. Moreover LCA need to be analysed at the light of scientific developments and overall environmental impact.

In order to improve the impact of the EUE on companies, the later needs to know about the improvements that the certification might bring (in terms of communication, energy saving or procedural organization amongst others) to, in turn, communicate them to their customers.

These KPI have to be developed in a business language in order to be catchy. The success stories available in the website don't translate the positive impact that the EUE has on business nor are the positive effects on the environment easily found.

**M**oreover, as in the case of ECOVER, simple icons should be developed in order to better communicate the environmental impact of the product to the end-consumer.

**F**inally, consumer satisfaction should be taken into consideration when developing green criteria. In fact, the green impact of a product will be valueless if the consumer is not satisfied with it. In that sense, the experience and the R&D of companies have to be taken into strong consideration when developing criteria.

## RECOMMENDATION ABOUT THE OPTION OF GPP

**G**PP can be another tool to attain the threshold of 20% of products referred above. Jurgen says: "If private demand does not exist, it can be created through awareness activities or through procurement requirement in the case of public procurement" (2000:35). Nonetheless, most interviewees from the private sector highlighted the need for GPP policy to be wisely chosen in order to ensure that the rules of fair competition are followed.

In fact, a European label should not be preferred to another environmental label just because one is developed by the EU and the other is not. GPP should be about environmentally friendly public tenders. In this regard, all available certifications have to be evaluated at the same level if they follow the same prerequisites.

## **EPILOGUE**

### **IS IT A SUCCESS OR A FAILURE IN GREENING CHAIN REACTION?**

From the company's side, where results are continuously evaluated, some questions popped up during the interviews: If the certification has not achieved results in more than 20 years, why would it be successful in the future? Why should a business invest in a certification that brings no recognition to the business? Why choose the EUE if other certification exist, which are recognized by the consumer, and are much more business tailored? We might say that "weak results generate weak interest."

On the other hand, saying that results are poor is looking at only one side of the equation. In fact, if it is true that expectations have been not fully met in regard to the number of products certified with the flower, the impact that the EUE has had on the relevant sectors is more important than a simple quantification of certified products would indicate.

The EUE is a European label supported by DG environment. The threshold of 20% of the market is important in order to evaluate the flower's results but more important are the marketing actions that will lead consumers to choose products wisely and support companies that go for excellence. This support can be attained through marketing, faster procedural development or stronger support of the companies adhering to the certification.

Finally, if the proactivity of some sectors in the development of green certifications has to be supported, green washing has, on the other hand, to be fought. From a company's point of view, green washing from competitors is not only socially and environmentally harmful but unfair competition.

The trust in the EU institutions has to be bettered. Or at least, the EUE has to communicate with the European citizen in order to develop a trustful relationship.

In the case of other ISO type I labels, the question of trust is directly related to independent bodies which are in charge of the certification. These independent bodies are mostly known and respected. In the case of the EUE, the certification bodies are different for each European country, which means that in most cases, consumers do not know who is in charge of what. Who is the main face representing the label they are supposed to trust and buy?

To have one major company in each of the EUE segment group to be certified with the flower would be another solution to ensure the EUE flower recognition and improve its trust among the EU citizen. The flower needs to be seen by the consumer. In order to improve the impact of the EUE there is the need to ensure that the consumer will look for it during the buying process. If a major brand (by product category) adopted the flower certification, it would end up in more labelled products on the market and more marketing. The repercussion on consumers of a trusted brand being EUE certified would mean more awareness not only for end consumers but also for competitors and for other brands.

The latest Euro barometer that analyzed the impact of the EUE on the consumers dates from 2006 and relied on a single question which was: "What the EU flower stands for", 48% of the respondents said they didn't know what it meant.



The impact of the EUE amongst consumer is a reflection of its impact amongst companies: the more companies will be involved with the EUE, the more the consumer will hear about it and will learn to trust it.

Even if the results of EUE amongst consumer might seem weak, the truth is that the EU label hasn't scored that bad if you think that no promotion has been done in the last five years at European level to ensure that the EUE results growth.

In conclusion, it is this researcher opinion that the EUE is a **success** in terms of greening and influencing companies which, in turn will support the greening of the consumer.

Finally, the researcher would like to highlight that further research needs to be done in terms of quantitative data on impact on EUE companies, consumers and the environment. Perhaps will the researcher, in a near future, engage with this data in the course of a PhD.

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**ANNEX 1**  
**FIRST EMAIL TO CONTACT STAKEHOLDERS**

Dear Mrs. XXXX,

I am working on a master's dissertation thesis about the EU ecolabel and its impact on consumers and companies in Europe. Attached you will find the dissertation project which was approved by the university of Cumbria for the conclusion of an MBA in sustainable management.

In this regard, I would like to know if you would be available for an interview in order to add XXXX point of view to my research

I have developed the interview questions thinking about an half an hour (maximum 45 minutes) interview in order not to take you too much time

Mainly, my research will focus on:

- Your evaluation of the EU ecolabel
- Marketing actions
- The impact of the EUE in your company or sector
- The impact of the EU ecolabel in the sustainable consumption and production policy
- Your insights on best practices of the EUE
- Recommendations you have for the EUE.

If you want, I am fully available to send you the interview questions and, in case you are not comfortable to answer any of the questions, please let me know and it will be removed from the interview.

Moreover, unless you are against it, the interview will be recorded. The recorded data will be used only for research purposes and will not be disseminated.

A copy of my dissertation will be sent to you for approval before the final dissertation is sent to the University for Evaluation.

Please let me know when we can schedule our interview,

Thank you very much for your help,

Kind Regards,

Claudia Martins

## **ANNEX 2**

### **INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

#### **a) Questions to National Authorities**

1- Besides the certification of the EU ecolabel, do you have other responsibilities or are you fully dedicated to the ecolabel? What do think about the EU ecolabel results?

2- Since the start of the EU ecolabel, how many certifications did you supervise? Do you have an average of requests per year? Do all requests end in a certification or are they some renunciations during the process? After the certification is given, are they any renunciation when it's time for the certification renewal? Do you have any data to provide?

3- In your experience, what is the most difficult part of the certification process for the companies that apply for the EU Ecolabel?

3- In your opinion what is/are the main reason/s for a company to be interested by the EU ecolabel?

4- In your opinion which are the most important pros and cons of the EU ecolabel? If it was your choice, what would you change? Would you change something specifically for the Belgian market?

5- In the book " The coexistence of two labels" the author states that the EU ecolabel inspection are not mandatory (in contrast with the Swann label for example). In this context, how do you ensure the compliance of the company with the EU ecolabel? Did you ever have a request for an inspection?

6- Do you think the EU ecolabel truly reflect the excellence of the products? What do you think of adding CSR aspects to the EU ecolabel?

7- In terms of the integrated product policy, do you think that enough is made in terms of facilitating businesses to become environmentally friendly?

8- Do you think an ecolable should be a minima in green public procurement?

9- In terms of promotion, did you do or participate in any marketing event for the EU ecolabel?

10- What do you think about the idea of having an EU certification private body?

In addition, if we still time, I would also ask yourself the following questions:

1) From your perspective, what are the main differences between companies that want to be certified and those who do not want to?

2) Are businesses (and the consumer) duly informed about what is meant by sustainable consumption and production?

3) What changes are necessary and essential at the enterprise level for real environmental procedures?

4) What do you think of the new environmental philosophy that says that the price of a product should reflect its environmental cost so that consumers can know the real cost of their consumption?

5) Do you think the eco-label is important for consumers? Are you looking for



labeled products when you go shopping?

If you do not feel comfortable with any of the above questions, do not hesitate to let me. Furthermore, if you prefer the interview to be conducted in French, there is no problem whatsoever.

b) Questions to EUE Stakeholders- Industry federations

- 1) On your website, I saw that the latest position on the EU eco-label from 2008 (it was in regards to the sustainable consumption and production action plan.) Could you tell me what is your position in relation to this environmental label nowadays? How do you evaluate the results obtained by the EU ecolabel?
- 2) In your opinion, what are the major problems of the EU Ecolabel at the enterprise level? Is there a difference between the vision of large companies and SMEs in relation to the EU eco-label?
- 3) In the case of a green public procurement do you think an ecolabel of type 1 or 2 should be minimum criteria for attribution?
- 4) In your position paper, you state that consumer demand is the main driver for the success of an Ecolabel. Yet, if companies are not certified with the ecolabel, consumers do not have access to ecolabels products. How, in your view how retail companies could be supported to ensure more certifications? How would you facilitate the development of criteria's without engaging the seriousness of the label?
- 5) At the European level, some labels are very successful while others are more difficult to compete. Why? Which change do you consider necessary considers for the EU eco-label to be a success?
- 6) Do you think that harmonization between European labels would boost the EU Ecolabel?
- 7) Have you supported with your members association projects to boost the EU eco-label?
- 8) What is the position in regards to the EU eco-label for services?
- 9) The views of Euro commerce in environmental protection and global warming show the interest of European retailers for these subjects. Do you think the European Ecolabel is a tool that European companies could use to demonstrate their support for European environmental policies? Notably in sustainable consumption and production policy?
- 10) Do you think the EU ecolabel should be referred to in EU policy documents namely in the EU 2020 strategy and the EU consumer s protection policy?
- 10) Do you think CSR criteria should be added to the existing criteria of the EU Ecolabel?
- 11) In regards to identical control methods and harmonized implementation (both were suggestions from Euro commerce to the revision of the SCP action

plan), do you think the actions taken were enough? What would you suggest? Do you think that, at some point in time, the EU ecolabel should be managed by a third party authority for EU labelling (like the ISO organization)?

In addition, if there is still time, I would also ask yourself the following questions:

- 1) From your perspective, what are the main differences between companies that want to be certified and those who do not want to?
- 2) Are businesses (and consumers) duly informed about what is meant by sustainable consumption and production?
- 3) What changes are necessary and essential at the enterprise level for real environmental procedures?
- 4) What do you think of the new environmental philosophy that says that the price of a product should reflect its environmental cost so that consumers can know the real cost of their consumption?
- 5) Do you think the eco-label is important for consumers? Are you looking for labeled products when you go shopping?

c) Interview question to A.I.S.E

Ne sachant pas si votre collègue parle français, vous trouverez les questions en anglais, en bleu.

Sur votre site internet, vous dites que vous participez au label environnemental de l'UE. Pourriez-vous me dire dans quelle mesure?

On your web site, you say that you participate in the EU ecolabel. Could you tell me to what extent is your participation?

Quelle évaluation faites-vous des résultats de l'écolabel européen pour votre secteur?

What evaluation do you make of the results of the European ecolabel for your sector?

Durant les entretiens tenus pour ma dissertation, d'autres parties prenantes ont souligné que, l'un des problèmes majeurs de l'écolabel de l'UE est qu'il n'ait pas été développé par les entreprises ni pour les entreprises (procédures trop lentes, trop d'analyses qui peuvent être en conflit avec d'autres normes européennes notamment REACH, trop de bureaucratie, entre autres). Est-ce aussi votre point de vue ?

During interviews for my thesis, other stakeholders underlined that, the major problems of the ecolabel of the EU is that it hadn't been developed by companies or for companies. The procedures are too slow, too many tests that are often in conflict with other standards European such as REACH, too much bureaucracy, among others. Is it also your point of view?

Vous avez développé une charte pour le nettoyage durable qui est un franc succès (200 entreprises et 85% de la production totale). Est-ce que cette charte est une prise de position de vos adhérents en relation au label environnemental européen? Une façon de montrer que les entreprises du secteur sont prêtes à agir en relation à la politique de production et de consommation durable? Est-ce une préparation pour les politiques relatives aux marchés publics verts?

You developed a Charter for Sustainable Cleaning that is a huge success (200 companies and 85 % of the total production). Is this charter a standpoint of your members about the European environmental label? Is it a way of showing that the companies of the sector are ready to participate in the sustainable consumption and production policy without using the EU ecolabel? Are you preparing for the green public procurement policy?

Est-ce que la charte est classifiée comme ISO type I, II ou III? Est-ce un de vos objectifs?

Is the charter classified as an ISO type I, II or III? Is it a goal?

Est-ce que la charte et la fleur de l'UE ciblent les mêmes consommateurs?

Have the charter and the EU flower the same consumer target?

Votre charte se fonde sur les trois piliers de la durabilité. Pensez-vous que les labels environnementaux soient défaillants s'ils ne comprennent pas la durabilité économique et la durabilité de l'organisation sociétale?

Your charter bases itself on three pillars of sustainability. Do you think environmental labels are unbalanced if they don't take into consideration economic and social sustainability?

Vous faites référence sur le site de la charte à un système d'équivalences avec les certifications ISO et EMAS. Pourriez-vous m'en dire plus ?

On your charter's web site you reference a system of equivalences with ISO certifications and EMAS. Could you tell it to me more?

Plusieurs auteurs soulignent la difficulté des PME à être certifiées par un label environnemental. Quels sont vos résultats au sein des PME? Avez-vous développé un support spécifique aux PME?

Several authors underline the difficulty of SME's to be certified with an environmental label. What are your results within SME's? Have you developed a specific support for SME's?

En relation à la sécurité des produits, notamment au niveau chimique. Est-ce que votre charte se fonde uniquement sur REACH où va-elle plus loin ? Dans le domaine chimique, avez-vous adapté des conditions requises dans l' écolabel de l'UE pour votre charte où pensez-vous que REACH va assez loin en relation au pilier environnemental de la durabilité?

In regards to safety of products, in particular at the chemical level, does your charter base itself solely on REACH or does it go further? In the chemical domain, did you adapt requirements from the EU ecolabel to your charter or do you think the REACH policy goes far enough in terms of environmental sustainability?

d)- Interview questions to companies

- 1)- Why did you decide to be EU ecolabel certified? Was it a request from your customers, a way of ensuring the overall quality of your products, is it part of the management philosophy or other?
- 2)- What are, for you, the main differences between companies that want to be certified and the ones that doesn't?
- 3)- Did the EU ecolabel certification bring new working procedures? Did you train your colleagues in the certification philosophy?
- 4)- What was more difficult during the certification process? Would you change or smother any of the criteria? Or do you think the criteria are appropriate for an environmental quality certification?
- 5)- What do you think about the cost of the EU ecolabel? Is it appropriate or is it a burden for you? In regards of time consumption, how do you consider the impact of the EU ecolabel certification and maintenance? Would you say that it is a burden when compared with other certifications?
- 6)- In terms of results, did the EU certification have an impact on your sales? Do you see any difference when you inform your providers and costumers that you have the certification? Did the EU certification open the "doors of the EU" to your company?
- 7)- In regards to marketing, did you change anything since you have been certified? Do you use EU logo in your communication, product ads, or website? Did you notice any impact?
- 8)- Are you planning on certifying more products with the EU ecolabel? 9)- If you could ask for three major requests (like for example more marketing or less procedural work) to the EU ecolabel certification board in order to ensure its success amongst EU companies, what would these requests be?
- 10)- Have you been in situation where the EU ecolabel criteria were in conflict with other EU criteria (like for example REACH)?

### ANNEX 3 INTERVIEW CHECKLIST

#### INTERVIEW CHECKLIST

Date of the interview

Name of the interviewee

Interview started at: H


Interview finished at: H

	YES	NO
1) Was the interviewee nervous?		
2) Was he more positive than negative?		
3) Was he more negative than positive?		
4) Was he cautious when answering the questions?		
6) Did he answer all the questions?		
7) Does want to stay confidential?		
8) Did he ask for some of his answers to stay confidential?		
8.1 Which one?	_____	
9) What was the main feeling of the interview?	_____	
10) What was the main conclusion of this interview?	_____	

# **ANNEX 4** **PRICE COMPARISON**






DELHAIZE



DELHAIZE			
PRODUCTS	PRICES/BRANDS		
Toilet Paper- price per paper roll (in Euro)	DELAHAIZE EUE ➡ 0.49 €	Nalys - With FSC 0.51 €	Lotus- No certification 0.51 €
Multi purpose paper roll- price per roll (in Euro)	DELAHAIZE EUE ➡ 1.00€	Lotus- No certification 1.12 €	
Printing paper (500 sheets)			
Paper handkerchiefs (per pack)			
Anti-liming detartrant (price per liter)	Froggy with EUE ➡ 2.19€	Ecover 5.98€	Antikal (AISE Charter) 4.79€
Anti-liming cleaner(price 500ml)	Froggy with EUE 3.99€	Ecover 3.99€	Bref (AISE Charter) ➡ 2.75 €
Toilet cleaning gel(price for 750 ml)			
Multi purpose cleaners (price per liter)	DELAHAIZE EUE ➡ 1.39€	Froggy with EUE 2.06€	AJAX 1.75 €
Multi purpose cleaners with dispenser (price per 500 ml)			
Glasses cleaner (price for 500ml)	DELAHAIZE EUE 2.99€	➡ CIF 1.83 €	Ajax 2.43 €
Hand dish washing detergents (500ml)	Froggy with EUE ➡ 2.09€	Prilpor 2.69€	Derft(with AISE) 2.49€
dish washing tablets (price per tablet)	DELAHAIZE EUE ➡ 0.13€	Ecover 0.22€	Finish 0.20€
Laundry detergent - powder pack (price per kg)	DELAHAIZE EUE ➡ 4.79€	Le chat (AISE) 11.56€	Ariel (AISE) 4.96€
Laundry detergent - Liquid (price per Liter )	DELAHAIZE EUE ➡ 3.18€	Dreft (AISE) 3.68€	Ariel (AISE) 4.59€
Laundry detergents in doses- price per dose	DELAHAIZE EUE ➡ 0.37€	Le chat (AISE) 0.53€	Ariel (AISE) 0.49€
Laundry detergent - recharges- (Price per liter	DELAHAIZE EUE ➡ 3.00€	Coral 4.66€	
Bath towel			
Indoor paints (price for 2,5L)			

➡ Lowest Price  
 No Product available



# Colruyt

COLRUYT			
PRODUCTS	PRICES/BRANDS		
Toilet Paper- price per paper roll (in Euro)			
Multi purpose paper roll- price per roll (in Euro)			
Printing paper (500 sheets)	Discovery (EUE) 3,49 €	 COLRUYT 2,99 €	IQ SELECTION (EUE) 4,29 €
Paper hanckerchiefs (per pack)			
Anti-liming detartrant (price per liter)	Froggy with EUE  2,08€	Ecover 4,96€	Antikal (AISE Charter) 3,16 €
Anti-liming cleaner(price500ml)			
Toilet cleaning gel(price for 750 ml)	Froggy with EUE  1,79 €	BREF (AISE) 2,04	
Multi purpose cleaners (price per liter)	Froggy with EUE 2,09 €	Ecover 1,72 €	 AJAX 1,95 €
Multi purpose cleaners with dispenser (price per 500 ml)			
Glasses cleaner (price for 500ml)			
Hand dish washing detergents (500ml)	Froggy with EUE  2,04€	Prilpor 2,50€	Derft(with AISE) 2,49€
dish washing tablets (price per tablet)			
Laundry detergent - powder pack (price per kg)			
Laundry detergent - Liquid (price per Liter )			
Laundry detergents in doses price per dose			
Laundry detergent - recharges- (Price per liter			
Bath towel			
Indoor paints (price for 2,5L)			

 Lowest Price  
 No Product available

# CORA

CORA			
PRODUCTS	PRICES/BRANDS		
Toilet Paper- price per paper roll (in Euro)	CORA with EUE ➡ 0,25 €	RENOVA no label 0,43 €	Scotex (FSC) 0,69 €
Multi purpose paper roll- price per roll (in Euro)	CORA with EUE 0,75 €	Lotus no label ➡ 0,65 €	
Printing paper (500 sheets)			
Paper hanckerchiefs (per pack)	CORA with EUE ➡ 0,15 €	CORA - no label 0,16 €	Lotus (no label) 0,20 €
Anti-liming detartrant (price per liter)	Froggy with EUE ➡ 2,37 €	CORA - no label 3,33 €	
Anti-liming cleaner(price500ml)			
Toilet cleaning gel(price for 750 ml)	CORA with EUE ➡ 1,59 €	Froggy (EUE) 2,15 €	WC Net 2,39
Multi purpose cleaners (price per liter)	CORA with EUE 1,40 €	Froggy (EUE) 2,28 €	➡ Mr. Propre 1,29 €
Multi purpose cleaners with dispenser (price per 500 ml)	Dettol (AISE) ➡ 2,48 €	Froggy (EUE) 3,11 €	
Glasses cleaner (price for 500ml)	Ajax ➡ 2,30 €	Froggy (EUE) 2,99 €	
Hand dish washing detergents (500ml)	Froggy with EUE 2,16€	➡ CORA (EUE) 0,99 €	Derft(with AISE) 2,45€
dish washing tablets (price per tablet)	Froggy with EUE 0,23 €	➡ CORA (EUE) 0,16 €	Derft(with AISE) 0,26 €
Laundry detergent - powder pack (price per kg)			
Laundry detergent - Liquid (price per Liter )			
Laundry detergents in doses- price per dose			
Laundry detergent - recharges- (Price per liter	Froggy with EUE 5,59 €	➡ Coral (no label) 4,91 €	
Bath towel	ONLY EUE PRODUCTS/ NO COMPARISON WAS POSSIBLE		
Indoor paints (price for 2,5L)	CORA with EUE 38,19 €	➡ Secret d'interieu 32,99 €	



Lowest Price



No Product available



Overall comparison:

PRODUCTS	DELHAIZE				COLRUYT		CORA			
	PRICES/BRANDS				PRICES/BRANDS		PRICES/BRANDS			
Toilet Paper- price per paper roll (in Euro)	DELHAIZE EUE 0.49 €	Nalys - With FSC 0.51 €	Lotus- No label 0.51 €				CORA with EUE 0.25 €	RENOVA no label 0.43 €	Scotex (FSC) 0.69 €	
Multi purpose paper roll- price per roll (in Euro)	DELHAIZE EUE 1.00€	Lotus- No label 1.12 €					CORA with EUE 0.75 €	Lotus no label 0.65 €		
Printing paper (500sheets)										
Paper handkerchiefs (per pack)										
Anti-liming detergent (price per liter)	Froggy with EUE 2.19€	Ecover 5.98€	Antikal (AISE Charter) 4.79€				Discovery (EUE) 3.49 €	COLRUYT 2.99 €	IQ SELECTION (EUE) 4.29 €	
Anti-liming cleaner (price 500ml)	Froggy with EUE 3.99€	Ecover 3.99€	Bref (AISE Charter) 2.75 €							
Toilet cleaning gel (price for 750 ml)										
Multi purpose cleaners (price per liter)	DELHAIZE EUE 1.39€	Froggy with EUE 2.06€	AJAX 1.75 €				Froggy with EUE 1.79 €	BREF (AISE) 2.04		WC Net 2.39
Multi purpose cleaners with dispenser (price per 500 500ml)							Froggy with EUE 2.09 €	Ecover 1.72 €		Mr. Propre 1.29 €
Glasses cleaner (price for 500ml)	DELHAIZE EUE 2.99€	CIF 1.83 €	Ajax 2.43 €							
Hand dish washing detergents (500ml)	Froggy with EUE 2.09€	Pilpor 2.69€	Derft (with AISE) 2.49€				Froggy with EUE 2.04€	Pilpor 2.50€	Derft (with AISE) 2.49€	Derft (with AISE) 2.45€
dish washing tablets (price per tablet)	DELHAIZE EUE 0.13€	Ecover 0.22€	Finish 0.20€							
Laundry detergent - powder pack (price per kg)	DELHAIZE EUE 4.79€	Le chat (AISE) 11.58€	Ariel (AISE) 4.96€							
Laundry detergent - Liquid (price per Liter)	DELHAIZE EUE 3.18€	Derft (AISE) 3.68€	Ariel (AISE) 4.59€							
Laundry detergents in doses- price per dose	DELHAIZE EUE 0.37€	Le chat (AISE) 0.53€	Ariel (AISE) 0.49€							
Laundry detergent - recharges- (Price per liter)	DELHAIZE EUE 3.00€	Coral 4.66€								
Bath towel										
Indoor paints (price for 2,5L)										
							Froggy with EUE 5.59 €	Coral (no label) 4.91 €		
							ONLY EUE PRODUCTS/NO COMPARISON WAS POSSIBLE			
							CORA with EUE 38,19 €	Secret d'intérieur 32,99 €		

